

P R A Y E R

AMBASSADORS

A MINISTRY OF THE KINGDOM



P. DOUGLAS SMALL

Ambassadors:

A Ministry of the Kingdom

A Project Pray Resource

A Project Pray University Training Tool

P. Douglas Small

AMBASSADORS
A Ministry of the Kingdom

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Forward



The language that we use is very important – and that is always true of an ambassador. The ambassador is to be the essence of diplomacy. The role demands a sure-footed dance between integrity and the buffering of information. It demands tact and grace, deference with dignity. For the Christian, the demand is humility, the disposition of a servant with the grace of a statesman. That is a delicate balance.

With that in mind, a caution should be raised. The rhetoric being employed by many Christians is quite triumphal. It assumes a posture of anticipated domination, not after the return of Christ, but here and now. Christ came, we must remember, not as a lion, but as a lamb. He came not to conquer, but to serve, to surrender to the Father's will and that meant surrendering into ungodly hands and doing so without protesting. He knew legions of angels were under his command. With his very word, as the 'Word' made flesh, as God incarnate, he could have disempowered, even slain, those who crucified him – but that was not his purpose. Ultimately, he would die a cruel criminal's death – and then rise from the grave. His triumph was

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spiritual, not military or political. His kingdom, he declared, was not of this world. He reigns now, though in exile.

There will come a moment on the eschatological timeline when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our lord and his God. But that is not now. Those who hold a post-millennial perspective or some variation of it may aspire to enforce the demands of the kingdom, to conquer the political domains of this world, and create the condition of military and political peace. Jesus would then be invited to return to a safe world. That viewpoint has failed miserably in the past. It is upside down theology. It is man making the world safe for God. It is the Christian, so-called, acting in an aggressive, militant, crusader role. Such a notion is dead before it arrives at the gate. It is deadly to our cause.

The messianic theme, as it developed in the Old Testament, took two paths. One was the theme of the suffering messiah, the servant. The other was the theme of the ruling messiah. The Messiah, the son of Joseph (*Mashiach ben Yosef*) is traditionally associated with suffering and rejection. The Messiah, the son of David (*Mashiach ben David*) with kingship. The implications of that model are clear as is the order. First, the cross, then the crown. First, the lamb, then the lion. First, the suffering, then the suppression of all evil and of the Evil One. As Christ suffered, he made it clear that his disciples would also suffer. Paul assures us, **“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him”** (2 Tim. 2:12).

“Look, I’m sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as serpents and as harmless as doves. Because people will hand you over to the Sanhedrin and flog you in their synagogues, beware of them. You will even be brought before governors and kings because of Me, to bear witness to them and to the nations. But when they hand you over, don’t worry about how or what you should speak. For you will be given what to say at that hour, because you are not speaking, but the Spirit

of your Father is speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will even rise up against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of My name. But the one who endures to the end will be delivered... A disciple is not above his teacher, or a slave above his master” (Matthew 10:17-24).

According to *Open Doors*, a global watch organization, they suggest conservatively that on average, 13 or more Christians are killed daily. Recently, in one African nation, Muslims went on a rampage and killed almost 90 believers in a matter of days, then, six months later, another 60. In Nigeria alone, almost 5000 Christians died at the hands of Muslims in one recent year. Every two hours, somewhere, a believer in Christ dies - 5,000 annually. That should shock the nation, but the mainstream media is not interested in reporting such data. It is too pro-Christian, and it runs counter to their multi-faith, multi-cultural narrative.

The 2024 World Watch List notes 50 nations, about one in four, where it is dangerous to live simply because one is a believer. In addition, 4,125 Christians were either detained, arrested, sentenced or imprisoned without trial; 3,906 believers were abducted; 3,200 Christians were raped, sexually harassed or forced to marry non-Christians; 42,849 followers of Jesus were physically or mentally abused; and nearly 300,000 Christians were forced to leave their homes. Many are now hiding or have fled their native land to seek safety. These are our brothers and sisters. And these are the verified numbers – not estimates.

In the same year, 14,000 churches, Christian schools, hospitals and other Christian owned or operated buildings were targeted. That represented a 700 percent increase over the previous year. Violence against Christians, globally, is increasing. In China, an estimated 10,000 churches were recently closed, after a campaign to coach underground churches into the open and register them with the government. In India, 2,228 were

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attacked. Some were destroyed. In these two countries, one Hindu India) and the other Communistic-atheistic (China), the attacks against churches were the most virulent -constituting 83 percent of the attack/closure incidents on churches around the world.

Other countries also saw violence against Christian churches - Angola, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Niger, Rwanda and Sudan were particularly high. The spirit of anti-Christ is raging globally. Following Jesus is becoming dangerous in many places and Christians are experiencing violence. Simply living for Christ or going to church can get you killed. Where is the global outcry?

The intensity of the persecution of believers is increasing and hostility toward Christ-followers is rising. We know, as we peer into the eschatological future, that such dark clouds will increase. We anticipate the spirit of anti-Christ to manifest as a prelude to the appearance of the man himself, the man of sin, along with the False Prophet. The 'beast' that is prophesied will rise to rule the world – and the righteous will suffer.

We may debate the moment at which the church will be raptured. It is clear, I believe, that we will not see the wrath of God. But it is not clear that we will be spared persecution. Indeed, how can we assert that notion when the global church, as noted above, is under such intense persecution? The coming global persecution of the church will erase the comfortable middle, forcing those who claim to be Christians, who are nevertheless cool and lukewarm, to defect from the faith or to embrace Christ in the face of persecution.

On April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School, America's modern era of persecution against Christians began with the question to 17-year-old Rachel Scott, "Are you a Christian?" Twelve fellow students were killed that day, along with a teacher at the hands of two well-armed, angry fellow-students, Eric Harris and

Dylan Klebold, who then killed themselves. Twenty more were injured. Rachel was their first victim. What a low view of life!

Each year, more than a thousand churches burn – and, 25 percent of the fires, some estimates are higher, are intentional, a result of arson. Why is America burning its churches down?¹ That is thousands of churches in the last two decades, the church, a victim of a hate crime. Between 1966 and 2000, about 1 percent of mass shootings were thought to be motivated by religious hate. Then, from 2000 to 2014, the number escalated to 9 percent, an astounding increase. Then, in 2018, the number jumped again to 17 percent through February 2020.²

What is happening to the nation? Almost three-quarters of church shooters were white and all were men. Sixty-four percent were single. About two-in-three had a criminal history and had experienced serious childhood trauma. The root of church violence? – violence at home. Unhealthy homes = unsafe churches and unsafe spaces in public culture. These angry males were motivated by hate; half knew their victims. Twenty-seven percent were racists in ideology. Eighteen percent had broken up from their spouses or partners. Forty-six percent were inspired by religious hate. Sixty-four percent occurred in the Bible belt, most in Texas.³

One consulting group that now specializes in church violence examined the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data for a recent 17-year period.⁴ The scope of the violence is breathtaking - armed robberies, aggravated assaults, shootings, stabbings, and bombings at places of worship - 1,652 such incidents, an average of 97 incidents per year re-

¹ <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v2i7-508.pdf>.

² <https://projects.voanews.com/mass-shootings/english/locations/worship.html>.

³ <https://projects.voanews.com/mass-shootings/english/locations/worship.html>.

⁴ This data is from 1999 to 2016.

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sulting in 155 deaths and 742 injuries. During these years, the annual average was 9 deaths – one every six Sundays and 44 wounded, one every 8 days.

Want a shock? The NIBRS-reporting agencies only cover 20% of the nation's population. Who knows the actual number? Extrapolating, the estimate approaches 480 incidents of serious violence at a place of worship in the USA every year – nine a week producing 46 deaths and 218 serious injuries. Neutrality toward faith, it turns out, is not neutral. We are, with our national hostility toward faith, cultivating measurable violence against people whose great crime are standards that the mainstream, the empowered cultural media and elite, want to jettison. Christians, like the Jews of Nazi Germany, are now the enemy, and Christian Nationalism is the boogeyman.

Remember, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins to pronounce blessings, sharing the secret to the blessed life. The high point in those beatitudes is the role of peacemakers. Every characteristic that Jesus mentions is a prerequisite for being an effective peacemaker. We are called to offer amnesty to those who reject God, in Christ. We are called to the ministry of reconciliation. We help people make peace with God. But then, what immediately follows is the blessing on the persecuted. Jesus doubles down on this, repeating the blessing for those who are persecuted, mentioning it twice.

Don't miss the point. Despite our best attempts at peace-making, we are not guaranteed that our overtures will be received. Some are recalcitrant. Some will not be reconciled. They are hard and resistant. We will not win them by attempting to meet force with force. For this reason, the disposition of some believers, some leaders, who advocate for Christian superiority, for dominance, rather than a servant disposition, is troublesome. Some voices are suggesting that in America, Christians need to emerge as a 'special elite', and advantaged class. That was the posture of the church during much of the middle ages,

and it was disastrous. There will come a time, when the Lion of Judah will roar, and Christ will return to claim the kingdoms of this earth. But now, we operate from a place of weakness, from deep dependence on God, with humility and respect for authority.

Conquest language is not helpful. Dominion theology is not what is advocated here. Even the ‘Seven Mountains’ language is often framed, not as spheres in which Christians serve and influence as salt and light, but as cultural mountains to be brought under the control of Christians who will reign. This is bad theology. And it is bad theater for a watching world. Secularists are already pointing out such language and using it against our efforts. The language of the Crusades is not only the language that we do not want to use, it is not the model for our mission. It is not language that assures those who oppose the gospel that we are here to love and serve – and though some, particularly those who are painting us negatively with our own brush, are not likely to change, our use of this language gives them fodder for frightening others and thoroughly muddying the waters.

Michelle Goldberg in her book, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism*⁵ begins with our own language – *the Joshua Generation*, a people who ruthlessly, politically conquer. She names the workshop titles of a Christian conference, “Conquering Corrupt Culture ...” and “How to Dethrone the Imperial Judiciary.”⁶ On our side, the language may be ‘heavenly,’ and ‘spiritual,’ merely metaphors, but we are being misunderstood. Our own language is being used against us – “the enemy under our feet,” “taking back the seven mountains of culture,” as well as “spiritual warfare.” We speak of dominating, ruling, binding and loosing, of our swords and shields, and on and on.

⁵ Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 1.

⁶ Ibid, 5.

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We must be servants, wearing the towel of humility, making a mad rush for the back of the line, insisting on putting others first, on gentleness and meekness. We are called to be peace-makers. In the book, *The Changing of the Guard: Biblical Principles for Political Action*, the Christian author, a well-known figure, uses the language of mandate, obligation, commission in the quest to ‘reclaim the land’ of America for Jesus Christ. He argues for ‘dominion’ in civil spheres, declaring,

*“It is dominion we are after. Not just a voice... not just influence... not just equal time. It is dominion we are after. World Conquest. That is what Christ has commissioned us to accomplish. We must win the world with the power of the gospel. And we must never settle for anything less...”*⁷

This is Crusades language. It is post-millennial – a church that conquers and forces on others its values. It rules. This is not the lamb, but the lion. To my dear fellow Christians, I beg you – this is dangerous eschatology. We are to operate in the shadow of the cross, and we dare not take up the sword, even of rhetoric.

The kings of the world need a godly witness as we approach the last days. Mayors need people who love their city and have a servant heart. This is the time for ambassadors, people of peace, not war. Not of conflict and strife. Notice the deferent language of Paul before kings – it was respectful. We must again learn to be Christians, to lead with love, without compromising truth.

⁷ Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 41.

PART 1

Discovering the Biblical Role of the Ambassador of the Kingdom

Overview:

The role of the Christian ambassador is representative in nature. The ambassador never stands alone, he stands between. In the ultimate sense, he represents Christ as Lord and King. And then the kingdom of God, as one government relating to another. In the immediate sense, the ambassador is sent by the Church and commissioned by its leaders. Christ has given the Church authority – the keys of the kingdom, the power to bind or loose (Matthew 16:19). These are not literal terms, or even primarily spiritual terms. They are legal terms.

The ambassador does not go, he is sent. He is not a rogue agent. Ambassadors have no authority except that which is given them by the sending agency. In this case, it is the Church which functions as an embassy of the kingdom of God on the earth in a given nation or city.

The ambassador fulfills a critical missional task, functioning as an agent and for the purpose of peacekeeping. This is the ministry of reconciliation. That role rises out of the office of priest. It eventually bridges to the function of the prophet. (More about that later in this chapter, and in Chapter 5, the ministry gifts and the role of the ambassador).

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We have a pesky problem. The function of an ambassador is hampered by the division and fractures in the body of Christ. There are sadly, and clearly, two very different churches.⁸ The ambassador must represent the cause of unity in a disunified Christian culture. There is, on one hand, a movement of Christians who seek to define their mission by Biblical mandates and principles, around the centrality

⁸ Taking the broad view, the Christian community can be categorized as Messianic, Catholic-Liturgical, Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic. Since the Reformation, there has been a huge divide between Roman Catholics and Protestants, and a thousand years prior, the divide came between the Roman Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. In the last one hundred years, the cleavage among Protestants has emerged over modernist-conservative issues. Many liturgical churches, and liberal protestants, have abandoned or softened their views on Biblical authority – particularly over culture-war issues. Catholics have held the line, and with the new pope, they appear to be even more committed to scriptural authority on the definition of marriage, gender issues, abortion, the church on mission, etc. Evangelicals have also gone through a shift. Left-leaning Evangelical voices have softened their position on gender, the definition of marriage, and Biblical authority. Some are being driven by environmental concerns and others are giving place to theistic evolution and Marxism as a legitimate political ideology. In some ways, conservative Christians are now closer to Catholics on social issues and biblical authority than to liberal Protestant movements. Though the differences are still huge – it is becoming increasingly clear that there is resonance among Pentecostals, conservative Evangelicals, Messianic, and charismatic Liturgical believers who hold to Biblical authority as well as the centrality and supremacy of Christ. Over against this stream are movements that have allowed the cultural narrative to eclipse Biblical authority and have compromised on many fronts to retain public favor. Even the supremacy of Christ is no longer the defining center for these movements. These are not clusters of organizations, though I have used broad labels to identify these streams. Rather, they are organic, movements of Christians inside organizations. One movement is increasingly liberal and unhinged from scripture, and the other adheres to it. Inside these two organic ‘churches,’ there are, of course, huge variations. In your city, you will discover Christians and pastors, from a broad range of denominations and movements who still accept scripture as authoritative on all issues, and long to see spiritual renewal and Christ exalted. That is the ‘Church’ that needs to be united across the city, for which ambassadors should speak.

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and supremacy of Christ. On the other hand, there are other Christians that seek the approval of culture and accommodate to it. They have softened or abandoned their views on sexuality, the definition of marriage, creation verses evolution, environmental care, even salvation through Christ alone. Some have abandoned their belief in either the virgin birth or the resurrection. We have two very different churches though they cannot be distinguished by denominational labels.

While it is true that people in every city need a church, it is equally true that the city needs a church — a godly church, a Biblical church, and a unified church. It needs an embassy of the kingdom of God. It needs a church of godly, stately people, who speak truth to power in love, but not from a place of power. Neither the church or its' ambassador team (and it is better to have a team, than a single individual), operate from a position of political power. Its authority is spiritual, given by God and recognized by heaven. Religious power meeting secular-political power is a dead end. The ambassador's power is clothed in humility, disguised, but recognized by God.

Paul was an 'ambassador in chains!' Christ remains the ultimate ambassador operating from heaven through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the agency of the Church. Yet, in a timeless manner, it is as if he is still pleading with humanity from the timeless bloody cross. Our greatest power is our weakness — our humility, our dependence on God. We come, not as roaring lions, but as innocent lambs.

The ambassador is a 'witness' sent on behalf of the kingdom of God, and its earthly embassy, the church. Such a position is not always safe. The danger of the position is emphasized in bloody footprints of those who have gone before, as the term witness, martureo, demonstrates. It came to mean martyr.

In these critical times, we bear witness, in a judicial sense, against sin and on behalf of justice and righteousness. We offer, as witnesses, evidence, that Jesus is alive and is now reigning, though in exile. We now have a great task before us — to witness to kings, to thrones, as we enter the shadows of last days eschatology.

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In 2 Corinthians, Paul urges a representative role upon the church at Corinth as ambassadors. What does that mean? What is incumbent on us as ambassadors? Remember, ambassadors do the stately work of communication, of maintaining peace between kingdoms. Ambassadors relate to kings – and people of power and influence.

Before we travel too far down this road, let's take a bit of a detour. The setting described in Matthew 16 takes place at Caesarea Philippi, 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee in the area now known as the Golan Heights. A large spring, then issuing from the mouth of a cave, was thought to be the gate to hell. It fed the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan river, watering the arid valley. Due to the abundant water, Caesarea Philippi was fertile and attractive and was considered sacred. It was decorated with numerous temples to Greek gods.

The site is at the northern edge of Israel near the Syrian border. It became a worship center for Baalism. The Greeks identified it with the god Pan. Pan was half-man and half goat – the god of fear. The modern name is Banias (Banyas), the Arabic form for Panias, from which we get the word panic – the state of fright created by the gods. The Romans called the place Caesarea Phillipi – Caesarea after Caesar, and Phillipi after Herod the Great's son, Phillip. The place is steeped in political and pagan overtones. By the 3rd Century BC, active sacrifices took place at the mouth of the cave. There, an open-air temple had been built.

The hillside next to the waterfall and cave is a rocky escarpment. In it, niches had been carved for statues of deities. There was no other site in Israel that rivaled the idolatry and paganism that was on display in this location. In the mind of the pagan, the cave at Caesarea Philippi was the entrance to the underworld, the home of their fertility gods. This was the gate to hell. And hell, or Baal, provided water for the entire Jordan valley. Should Israel not be grateful? It was a hard notion to displace.

The site was off limits for the godly sons of Abraham. It was the red-light district of paganism where open and shameless idolatry, and despicable acts took place. The fact that Jesus took his disciples to the ‘gates of hell,’ to the fountain of idolatry is a lesson to us. We do not hide from evil, nor should we study it. We do not shrink from political powers or paganism, nor do we seek a fight. We get our orders from heaven. We act, rather than react.

The Pivotal Question: Jesus?

It was in this vicinity – and it may have been, underneath the niches to the pagan gods or at the base of the waterfall, that Jesus asked the burning question, “*Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*” (Matthew 16:13). And it is this question that is near the heart of every visit to every person of power – “Who is Jesus?” The disciples shared the prevailing cultural take on Jesus. He was Jeremiah, Elijah or John the Baptist risen from the dead. You will hear similar things in today’s world. Jesus, a great man, a wise teacher, a prophet, the one who established Christianity.

Each of the prophets mentioned by the disciples, echoing public opinion, were nation-engaging prophets. They lived in times when the nation was on the edge of collapse and facing the judgement of God. Elijah had called fire down from heaven to call Israel away from the Baalism. The same Baal that was celebrated at Caesarea Philippi. Jeremiah was the weeping prophet, who warned Judah of the consequences of their sin in the days of Judah’s collapse and subsequent exile. John, the Baptist, had broken from the Aaronic priesthood of his father, Zacharias. You recall, the birth of John was announced as his father was burning incense during Israel’s holy week. John might have followed in his father’s footsteps, serving as a traditional temple Aaronic priest. However, he broke from that order, announcing a new tradition, an extension of the priesthood of Melchizedek. From the wilderness of Judea, he called the whole nation to re-

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pentance, to a fresh start, to prevent the axe from being laid to the root and to avoid another national judgement.

Jesus stood in continuity with these ideas. *"What about you?"* He asked. *"Who do you say I am?"* (Matthew 16:15). Suddenly things became personal. Peter broke with speculation and issued a bold confession. *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:16). Jesus pronounced a blessing on the fisherman, *"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven"* (16:17).

Every ambassador is dancing with this question. It is in the minds of politicians and pagans, *"Who is Jesus?"* The answers are often tentative. The disciples offered speculation and supposition. But to be operative, to open the door to transformation, it must be an answer born of conviction, *"Jesus is the Christ, the anointed One, the Messiah, the King of kings."* No one who is a public servant can be effective until they settle this question. And no public servant who is a Christian can subordinate their Biblical values to a secular, sometimes godless, political system. The question, *"Who is Jesus? – to you?"* does not have to be approached in a hostile confrontational manner. Indeed, it should be tendered with a comforting conviction, a certainty that invites exploration, which encourages faith.

Standing on the solid rock, we invite leaders of nations to take a step of faith and to believe. God has sent Jesus – to them. We want them to answer the question. *"He is not merely a great man or teacher. It is the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"* And notice, there is a blessing when that declaration comes forth. *"Blessed are you... this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by the Father... I tell you that you are Peter, on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it"* (Matthew 16:18).

Peter's answer revealed the source of our values. Jesus, the template for our lives. If not Jesus, who do we emulate? There, at

the gates of hell, amid all the idols, at a sacrificial worship center for Greeks and Romans, it must have been a stunning moment. These gates, supported by Greek history and folklore, and strengthened by Roman might, would not prevail? They would falter? They would be overcome? By whom? The disciples must have looked at one another mystified. The mouth of the cave had been spewing water for millennia. And the water was synonymous with the fertility god, Baal. Rome, as Greece had done, supported the place with its power. Shut the gate of hell? Stop the water? Challenge it all? How?

The Triumph of the Gospel

In 363 AD, a few decades after Constantine the Emperor was converted, an earthquake destroyed Caesarea Philippi and its grand marble temple which had been dedicated to Augustus. The site was thereafter largely abandoned. The gospel had triumphed. Seven centuries later, another quake completely closed the cave, leaving the water to seep through the seams in the limestone. *“The gates of hell will not prevail.”* Our gospel is that of the overcoming kingdom; one that will triumph over all the kingdoms of this world.

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). The disciples did not live to see the binding of the mouth of the cave, but the gospel they preached displaced Greek mythology. It was no longer the state religions. Christianity toppled Roman idolatry. It is hard for us to imagine a city with leaders who honor God and boldly displace the impact of paganism in their jurisdiction. Leaders who believe deeply that Jesus is the Christ and are not ashamed of being openly identified with Him. Leaders who embrace the gospel of the kingdom that overcomes and shapes nations.

In the time of Jesus and the disciples, the gates of hell were

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symbolized by the mouth of the cave at Caesarea Phillipi. Around it was a proliferation of idolatry that seemed to prevail over the land. Greek paganism and Roman political power seemed to have the upper hand. Pagan beliefs had dominated parts of the culture for thousands of years. How could this grip on heads and hearts be broken?

What men had to grasp and confess came only by a revelation from God and the quickening of the Holy Spirit, “*You are the Christ, the anointed One, the Son of the Living God.*” It was not a revelation of logic or of the flesh, but by the Spirit. This confession, this conviction, multiplied millions of times, would shut the gates of hell. It would be the rock on which the Church would stand. This was an inner certainty about true identity – the ‘who’ – of Jesus. We only know ‘who’ we are by being certain about ‘who’ Jesus is. That inner ‘witness’ would produce humble, confident, bold people, who would challenge hell itself.

The keys to bind and loose, to close and open, were somehow found in the power of the confession. This is inspired proclamation out of the revelation from God himself to Peter regarding Christ. That revelation and confession are at the heart of the salvation experience. “Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God!” And with that confession, the grip of sin and hell on a life are broken. The terms bind and loose are judicial in nature. On confession, one is loosed, freed, from the bondage of sin and any hold by hell or Satan. And in rejecting Christ, one is left bound, by sin and death, and held over for judgement.

Anyone who receives that revelation from the Father, knows in that moment, that Jesus is no mortal. Nor is He a mere shadow of some great prophet. He is the Messiah, the long promised One, the Son of God. This is the effect of salvation – of belief and confession. It is a result of spiritual enlightenment. It liberates one, by grace, from paganism and power of false gods. Filled with the Spirit, we are not intimidated by earthly or political powers. “Who is Jesus? Who do you think He is? Who

are you willing to say, with conviction, that he is? Who is he to you?” This is a watershed question. This is when we switch sides. This is how we renounce dark powers – not by cursing them, but by confessing Christ. This is where we are loosed, liberated, and set free from both the power of sin and Satan.

The reception of the gospel and the confession it elicits, looses us from the power and bondage of sin, setting us free to follow Christ. Guilt is gone, and so is the grip of sin. Rejecting Christ as Lord, as Messiah, not believing the revelation that comes by the Spirit, resisting the good news, all leave us bound for judgement. Some have made the focus of this passage on binding demons. But that is not supported by the text. It is the liberty of humans that Christ has in view here. At the gate of hell, men can be freed and set free. The revelation comes, even in such places. It is in this sense that Satan is bound, his power limited, his hold on humans terminated.

After Jesus had elicited Peter’s confession, and made the startling declaration about spiritual authority, he gave them a solemn word. *“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory”* (Luke 9:26). This is not a time to shrink back. It is not a time for silence. There is no neutral ground in the face of paganism or with political power that force non-Christian values on its constituents. That does not mean that such collision with powers is safe.

The Problem of Overconfidence: Peter

Here, with the certainty that the disciples, at least Peter, knew his identity, Jesus revealed his sealed fate, his mission to die on a cross as a demonstration of the Father’s love. That same hatred that Jesus experienced, would be focused on his disciples after his death. His disciples, and others who followed him would face the same hostile culture. We are caught between a clash of powers – and the cost is often death.

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Peter was so quick to rightly confess the spiritually disclosed secret of the identity of Jesus as the Christ. Overconfident of his superior spirituality, he would then err. It was inconceivable for him to believe Jesus to be both the triumphant Christ, the lion, and the sacrificial lamb. He had gotten the fact of the revelation right, but not its implications, not the path it would take to triumph.

Peter, spontaneously and arrogantly interrupted Jesus, taking him aside for correction – a startling act. Privately, he rebuked Jesus. “*Never, Lord!*” he said. “*This shall never happen to you!*” (Matthew 16:22). How quickly our train jumps its tracks. The response of Jesus was immediate. “*Get behind me, Satan!*” – the word means, *adversary*. Peter was now driving on the wrong side of the road. From articulating divine insight from the Father, he had now slipped into being a mouthpiece for the devil. “*You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns*” (Matthew 16:23).

The NIV reads, “*You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.*” The ESV calls Peter “*a hindrance... not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.*” The Berean calls Peter “*a stumbling block,*” setting Jesus up for a spiritual fall. Incredible. Jesus is calling him out. Showing him how quickly he can be in the Spirit, and then out of the Spirit, and how treacherous that is. The CEV says bluntly, “*You’re in my way because you think like everyone else and not like God.*”

When we think like the world, we get in God’s way and hinder His work. We become a stumbling block to that work and to those doing it. “*You are tempting me to sin,*” Jesus said (God’s Word Translation). Peter, in the Spirit, is the head of the class. He was a bright spot of divine revelation one moment and then he took a tumble – big time. “*You are an obstacle in my way, because these thoughts of yours don’t come from God, but from human nature*” (Good News). Our good ideas are not God’s ideas. The ISV uses the strong language, “*You are an offense to me!*” The Mace New Testament says Jesus “*frown’d upon Peter, and*

said, out of my sight pernicious obstacle to my designs; your views are all worldly..." So much for getting the key question right but then failing the course. The lesson is clear – no self-confidence. No cocky spiritual arrogance. No sense that we have it all figured out. We are always behind on revelation and insight, needing humility and deep dependence on the Holy Spirit.

The Price of Self-Denial: All Disciples

Our representing, our speaking for the church, requires that we say what God intends us to say, and not *"those [words, ideas] that be of men"* (Weymouth). The scripture reads,

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?'" (Matthew 16: 24-26).

There is a price required of ambassador-disciples who stand at the gates of hell, and declare to the powers what they know by divine revelation in their souls that *"Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the rightful king of the earth."* Though he was crucified, he could not be destroyed. At his death, he would not go to the mouth of hell, but into its very depths to disarm the powers. He would rise from the dead, ascend to the Father and claim the right to share the throne with his Father. He *"disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross"* (Colossians 2:15). The New Living Translation reads, *"He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross."* You must notice the contradiction. Victory at the cross? This is not victory out of strength or domination, but by surrender. At the cross, love subdued hate. Silence was louder than the voice of the unruly mob.

We disarm the powers in the same way – not by our calculating

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logic or spiritual bluster, but by the cross. It is not over, *“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done”* (Matthew 16:27). He will come *“in his kingdom,”* (Matthew 16:28), with all the force of heaven’s authority.

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus took his kingdom message to the gate of hell, into the den of idolatry, to the altar of paganism – without intimidation. There, he drew a line in the sand, “Who am I?” They had heard him teach and preach and seen him heal the sick. They had seen miracles from their own hands because of their proximity to him. Now, they had to decide, definitively, without reservation, with their lives on the line.

Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah and earth’s true king, stood at Caesarea Philippi. There, he represented, in the ultimate sense, the kingdom of God. He was heaven’s divine government standing in the face of Greek mythology and Roman paganism and its power without fear or intimidation. He was at the seat of power that honored Augustus Caesar. Yet he was unrecognized as the true God, the agent of creation, the redeemer of fallen humanity. Soon, his disciples would represent him to the nations, to their powers, and they would stand in the face of mythology and paganism – and in such an hour they could not flinch or waffle. “Who am I?” That question had to be settled in their mind and heart.

The Power of Position: the Authority of the Church

In the immediate sense, the ambassador is sent by the church and its leaders. Christ has given the Church authority – the keys of the kingdom, the power to bind or loose. The ambassador does not *go*; he is not a rogue agent, he is *sent*. Even Christ was sent, as was the Holy Spirit. Ambassadors have no authority except that which is given them by the sending agency. In our case, the authority comes from God through the Church. The Church

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has custody of the keys and functions as an embassy of the kingdom of God on the earth, and in a given nation or city.

Again, the ambassador represents God, but is commissioned by the church – hopefully, the ‘Church’ of the city or a cluster of congregations. The message that the ambassador bears is a message forged by the commissioning church. After prayer and discernment, the ‘Church’ sends a message to the city leaders, state officials, political persons or community influencers. The message is sent through the ambassador. There is wisdom in “*the multitude of counselors*” (Prov. 15:22).

The stately function of the ambassador is one we now desperately need to understand and employ. Paul wanted the Corinthians to grasp this concept. Their disorder and lack of maturity affected the critical missional to which they had been called. They were being asked now to be ambassadors for Christ and his kingdom to a wicked and troubled city. They could not be insulated. For the task before them, their credibility mattered. We face the same problems – credibility, disorder at times, and insulation from the world. Frankly, the idea of being ambassadors is not on the radar screen of most believers. The idea may be brand new to some. Our rigid concept of separation of church and state mitigates against the idea. The role of the ambassador does not erase the line of separation. The ambassador stands on that line in a priestly manner.

The function of the ambassador rises out of the office of the priest and the priestly call to be an agent of reconciliation. It is tied to the office of priest more than that of the prophet. Yet, not with a lesser commitment to truth or the moral concerns that might be raised by a prophet. It is also apostolic and missional in nature. It is from the office of the King – the King of kings, from the very throne of God. The ambassador represents the kingdom of God interfacing with the kings and kingdoms of this world in an appeal to them to recognize God and His overarching authority.

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Here are the three great offices of the Old Testament – king, priest and prophet. Though the ambassador is a representative of the king, sent by the church, the primary agency of the kingdom of God in the earth, the ambassador postures as a priest – not a king. Though the ambassador is and should be kingly in demeanor and confidence, his disposition is that of humility. It is the posture of a servant, on the continuum of love, with reconciliation in view. The goal of the ambassador is to be a godly influence, to tip the chair of the ruler before whom he appears toward an openness to God, to Christ, and to righteousness; toward being an agent of God's work in the office they occupy – whether national or local, jurisdictional or representative, that of Mayor or Governor. When the work of the ambassador fails, the prophet emerges, operating on the continuum of truth. The prophetic message informs the leader of what happens when nations and cities subvert truth and suppress righteousness. Such a warning is itself an expression of love and grace.

In introducing the concept of the office and function of an ambassador, Paul is making the case for the ministry of reconciliation, of peace-making. The ambassador expedites communication between two seats of power. He seeks to avoid war and conflict between the two powers by maintaining a positive relationship, particularly on behalf of the one he represents. He is a truth-teller, though he is also skilled in diplomacy. The ambassador is not home. He is living in one nation on behalf of another. His own moral rectitude and legal conformity to the host nation is critical to prevent an international incident.

The ambassador, as a peacemaker, as an emissary, stands on the bridge between the city-county-state-nation and the church. He stands between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of God. In this ministry, the church must be united, not divided. The church can hardly be a force for unity in the city, or anywhere if, by nature and function, it is not unified.

A Divided Church

A number of years ago in an Australian city, a suburb of a metropolis, a serial killer brought a community under a spell of fear. Local leaders called together every agency in the city to debrief and mobilize them – every agency but the church. Pastors complained about being excluded. City leaders were perplexed. “Who do we call?” they lamented. “The Catholic church? The Uniting Church?” And they named others. “We cannot call every congregation,” they explained. And to call one, and not another, was to give preference and alienate the pastors not called.

It was clear to the Evangelical pastors of the area that their disunity was so obvious to the city, that it was an obstruction to their being a positive force. It should be clear to all of us – that our disunity is not only crippling but in view of our trinitarian God, and the biblical call to humility and unity (John 17, Psalm 133), it is also sin.

The church, when duly informed, launched a prayer vigil. A officer (a relatively new Christian) was pulled into the interview room simply to observe. The suspect was about to be released. As the officer sat quietly and prayed, the suspect became increasingly fidgety. “Get him out of here,” he ordered, referring to the believing officer. The investigator did the opposite. He left the room leaving the suspect alone with the believer and retreated to an observation room. Tensions rose. The believer leaned forward and said boldly, “You did it. You committed all three murders.” Pausing, he continued. “I know you didn’t mean to.” And then, speaking out of a frame of reference that came from his faith, he declared, with a tone of mercy in his voice, “Something came over you, a darkness, and it compelled you, and you now deeply regret it.”

Watching the suspect melt in guilt, he continued, “You will never be free unless you are honest, and you decide to get help

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from God.” The suspect confessed – and the murders were solved. Veterans in the department knew that the matter was not cleared up with traditional police methods. It was God’s own intervention. “How did you know? What kind of interrogation tactic was that?” It was discernment, coupled with a word of knowledge from the Holy Spirit. Here was conviction, laced with mercy and a word of wisdom. It looked not at the crime alone, but the lack of inner peace and rest, only possible by the confession and full integrity of the sinner.

How might God use us to impact our city if we had a positive relationship with city leaders? We are, too often, a non-player. Is this God’s desire, for His people to be marginalized? We have been too accepting of the separation, not only of church and state, but of faith and the public square. God loves people - and the cities where they live. Jesus wept over a city - Jerusalem.

An Apostate Church

Pause for a moment, if you will. There is another problem. As we noted earlier, there are two churches – when there should only be one. There is a true church and a false church, one that is according to Biblical standards, apostate. And the distinguishing contrast of the two does not follow denominational lines. At the Reformation, the unity of the church was shattered. The theological issues that need dialogue across the denominational spectrum have multiplied in the last five centuries. Several denominations have completely abandoned Biblical principles and are no longer orthodox in theology nor do they hold to conservative standards of living. Behind the division are issues of pride, of moral compromise and the lack of accountability. The line does not run between denominations and movements, but down the middle of each. We must not be judgmental, nor can we be without discernment.

We will often find strange partners in our unity efforts. For

example, our Catholic friends are committed to the authority of scripture, as are most evangelicals, with much of the mainstream and liturgical church having abandoned that position. Likewise, we are closer to the Catholic position than the mainstream church on issues like abortion, the definition of the family, sexuality and gender, creation and evolution, etc. This is a strange development. We are likewise baffled by those who resist unity and collaboration.

There are congregations with pastors and denominational leaders who seem to be self-serving. Yet, there are true believers in every tribe – who have stayed where God planted them, despite their qualms with the structure, leadership, or the sins of any given movement. They are missionaries inside these Christian movements. The true church is not institutional, but organic. The practical manifestation of that organic church, in the institutional wineskin, is its life-giving force, its missional verve, its visionary perspective. Organic spiritual life is the source of its dynamism.

Sadly, we are divided and ineffective, unconvincing to a watching world. For that reason alone, we need unity and humility more than ever. We need unity characterized by love and acceptance, forgiveness and grace, yet still defined by truth and true reconciliation, accountability and the observable evidence of the Christ-life. The liberal church has too often jettisoned truth, and allowed it to be eclipsed by soft love, not tough love. And by sentimental, truthless tolerance parading as love.

The conservative church, partly in reaction, has grasped scripture tightly, allowing truth to eclipse love. At times this truth manifests as legalism. Stiff and uncompromising, it cannot conceive of reconciliation, of being ‘a friend to sinners,’ of leading with love – unconditional love. Understanding holiness as separatism and holding to an escapist eschatology that hinders mission, it is often blind to the possibility of community transformation, and void of a vision of ‘nations being joined to the Lord.’ Like the church on the left, it is only a caricature of what God desires.

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It is often the liberal church that more closely resonates with the state. It is viewed as more legitimate than either evangelical or Pentecostal congregations. It is more accepting of social-cultural preferences, more in sympathy with community trends that the conservative church sees as dangerous, if not sinful. It is more affirming, less confrontational, more tolerant and less prophetic. This is an even more compelling reason for conservative believers and congregations to create an ambassador role, a group of peacemakers postured toward dialogue and conciliation, without jettisoning truth.

In the mystery of God's ways, he uses us even with and in our flawed state. Despite the imperfections of the church, we must attempt *to be the church* that God has intended us to be in every city. It is not merely individuals in the city who need a church; the city needs a Church – not churches, but the voice and actions of a godly, unified people on mission. Despite the push-pull of liberalism and conservatism, of faith in the authority of scripture and the rejection of Biblical authority, we must – those who hold to scripture as trustworthy and inspired - be the church. Only a third (37%) of pastors (and that is mirrored by congregates) possess a biblical worldview. The majority - 62 percent - hold a hybrid worldview known as syncretism.⁹

Even more shocking is that only 12% of Children's and Youth Pastors hold a biblical worldview. And among those who should be preaching *true truth*, the term used by Francis Schaeffer, only 13 percent of teaching pastors hold a biblical worldview.¹⁰ Years ago, a survey indicated that only 62 percent of USA pastors believed in the resurrection. That is true among Anglicans now in England, and among laity in the USA – slightly more than 30 percent doubt the literal resurrection.

⁹ Tracy Munsil, "New Study Shows Shocking Lack of Biblical Worldview Among American Pastors," American Worldview Inventory, CRC; May 12, 2022; <https://www.arizonachristian.edu/2022/05/12/shocking-lack-of-biblical-worldview-among-american-pastors/>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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They see it as allegorical. Without the resurrection, there is no Second Coming, no Kingdom reign, no descent of the Spirit as a result of the prayer of Jesus in heaven after His ascension and heavenly enthronement. The whole of ecclesiology, missiology, eschatology, soteriology is thrown into chaos. The Biblical record is not trustworthy. The Christian faith is lost. It is reduced to an optional set of values and morals. But deistic moralism is not Christianity.

Much of the liberal church has reduced theology to philosophy – and that, of course, posits Christianity as one of many philosophical views of God, man, the world and eternity. America's first colleges were theological training centers, and theological studies were considered the mother of all other disciplines. Now, theology has been relegated to the philosophy department and those who teach it do so without conviction or confidence in the authenticity of the Biblical text or its truth. The next step, from theology as philosophy, is to pluralism. And that is only a brief step on the path to agnosticism.

There has never been another time as urgent as our day that demands that the evangelical church speak with one voice, unify, in order to be the voice of compassion tethered to truth. Instead, we are fragmented nationally. Perhaps in the local community, we could defy this national norm, and build a coalition of like-minded, Biblically-sound, missional churches. Ideally, there is one church in the city – one true church. It is not institutional, not primarily, but organic. It is often struggling to be in the world but not of it, composed of a pilgrim people.

In reality, there is also another church in the city – one that is increasingly apostate, struggling for affirmation from the world, wanting to be inclusive and non-confrontational, majoring on love, acceptance and forgiveness, without the counter themes of truth (balanced by love), accountability (necessary for safe, open and accepting arms) and reconciliation (the end, the goal of forgiveness).

The Path to Unity: Core Theology

There are certain theological elements that constitute the core of Christian truth, without which, the integrated whole of theology collapses. That theological core distinguishes Bible Christians: Creation and the Fall, the credibility of the Biblical story, the redemption of humanity through Christ who was virgin born, sinless in life, and vicarious in his crucifixion. He was resurrected, is enthroned and he will return. Add to those beliefs the descent of the Spirit to convict, and to call men to Christ and save, and to empower the church on mission. The Apostles' Creed is another succinct articulation of this theological core.

Another stratum of theology, less definitive, defines denominational differences. Those distinctive beliefs have been elevated to emphasize what, for example, Catholics believe versus Protestants. Or, what Calvinists believe versus Arminianism. Or yet Cessationists versus Pentecostals. In too many cases, we have elevated denominational theology over the centrality and supremacy of Christ.

There is a third layer of theology that is characterized by cultural differences, issues of conscience, differing gifts or by the distinctive missional call of a movement. Some of these ideas have become central, displacing the centrality and supremacy of Christ.. The ideas have been elevated to a status that defines the movement. They, in the plan of Christ, became the organizing principle.

Those who embrace the centrality and supremacy of Christ and core theology hold to a Biblical worldview – where God is sovereign, the Creator. And where man has both sinned and continued his rebellion, his nature now fallen and flawed. A world into which God has spoken by His word (giving of the law) and through His prophets, both largely rejected. A world into which God then came, the 'Word', incarnated, disguised as a man, only to be rejected and crucified, but found indestructible as proved by his

resurrection. A world into which the Holy Spirit descended, to live inside men's hearts, to empower them to give witness of God, His Son, and to call men to know God as Father. This same Jesus, we are told, that was taken up, will come again and the kingdoms of this world will become the 'Kingdom' of our God. Now, Jesus, the only true rightful King of the earth, the last Adam, reigns in exile, interceding, waiting for his church to finish their mission. This is a Biblical worldview.

Syncretism seeks to reconcile Biblical theology, its beliefs and behaviors, its ethics and evidentiary life, with those of the world. It cannot be done without destroying Christianity. Syncretism elevates other faith systems and attempts to find common ground with Christianity. But congruence cannot be found, so they, erode the unique and exclusive place of God - as Creator; Christ - as Redeemer and Lord; Scripture - as authoritative and inspired. Syncretism, in its desire to repack-age Christianity for acceptance by the world, compromises on issues of both belief and behavior. In its attempt to draw inclusive circles, it erases all the lines. In attempting to embrace other faiths, the Koran becomes as authoritative as Scripture, Mohammed as revered as Jesus, Allah just another name for Yahweh. Such a compromise is deadly. It destroys the distinctive Christian faith. It renders it meaningless and useless. It makes the death of Christ and the cross simply one way to God among many others, Christ becomes one messiah among a plethora of others.

When core theology is incomplete, when it is missing a key element of the whole, we have a lack of orthodoxy. On the other hand, when core theology is infused with some denominational distinctive whereby others are de-Christianized, because, for example, their baptismal mode is different, their style of worship is non-conforming, they do or do not speak in tongues, we have the making of a cult. The same is true when we press cultural elements or matters of conscience into the core. We tend to create rigid rules in our attempt to fend off cultural compromise

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and inform the conscience of others. When we do this, we have moved from orthodoxy toward becoming a cult.

With a healthy understanding of core theology and Christian grace, we can forge a unity that agrees to disagree. “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity.” The quote is attributed to Augustine. But it was a word that was desperately needed in the post Luther years, especially in the bloody season of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). The Protestant cause was hemorrhaging badly. A relatively unknown Lutheran Theologian in Germany echoed Augustine’s mantra in a published tract calling for Christian unity (around 1627). Rupertus Meldenius is not a name we remember, but he stood as a minority voice on the right side during a time when the church was at its worst. Phillip Schaff, the historian observed, the watchword of Christians was to be peacemakers. The Moravians knew the phase well.

The Reformation, sparked by Martin Luther, destroyed our unity. A new reformation must restore it. Around core theology, characterized above all by the centrality and supremacy of Christ, we must gather, allowing our differences to enrich us, but neither define us nor divide us. And driven by task theology, the unfinished mission, we must complete the compelling great commission (gospel engagement), in the spirit of the great commandment (love and care), out of the energy of the great commitment (prayer).

Considering the Person: Christ (Not Merely Ideology)

Paul appealed to the divided Corinthian church to become a conciliatory body - ambassadors. That is strange since it was one of the most fragmented congregations in the New Testament. This is puzzling indeed. Paul knew that transformation occurs in connection with our representative role. We become what we advocate. We are healed as we act as agents of healing to others. Christian ministry, its role, its incumbent standards, and the

spirit of the Christ-like ideals that we articulate is not a thing. It derives not from an institution, but from a person, from Christ, by the indwelling, empowering Holy Spirit who infects us and changes us. We are, as is often expressed, wounded healers.

As Paul closes the letter to the Corinthians, he shockingly suggests that they might not even be Christians. *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified”* (2 Cor. 13:5). This is outrageous. Throughout the first book, Paul pleaded for their unity (1 Cor. 1:10; 12:12-31; 14:1). He urged above their preoccupation with spiritual gifts, the practice of love. His appeal, his characterization of *agape* love, found in First Corinthians 13, is a high point in all of literature, and in the New Testament itself.

He argued, speaking by the Spirit, that discernment, spiritually acquired knowledge and faith, were all inferior to love. He was referring to charismatic gifts (1 Cor. 13:1-2). He said the same about the prophetic, implying the other office gifts (Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Cor. 13:2; 14:3-5). Even giving one’s life, sacrificially, which is the essence of the service or motivational gifts (Rom. 12:1-9a, 10) were also inferior to love. All these types of spiritual gifts-motivational gifts (Rom. 12: 1-9a, 10). the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12: 7-11), and ministry/office gifts (Eph. 4:11-13), to be effective, must rise out of love. In point, all spiritual ministry rises out of and is tethered to love.

Yet, the love Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13 is not human – it is God’s love shaping our love, God transforming us and loving through us. Unhinged from love, from relationship, spiritual gifts are pointless. They are hollow and fail to accomplish their purpose. All spiritual gifts are some aspect of Christ revealed in us. That revelation found its climax on the cross. A cross from which Jesus, the Christ, forgave. That cross still stands. It is the ugly reminder that Christ followers are at risk in this world system and its godless, ruthless order. The ministry of the ambassador is cast against the background of the cross

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and with the reality that the kingdoms of this world to which we have been called to bear witness are sometimes hostile.

The love presented in Corinthians and the condition of unity it creates is nevertheless not an end in itself. That is, it is not static, but dynamic. It is not self-enclosing but missional. It is the launching pad for this ministry of reconciliation and being ambassadors for Christ and his kingdom. “*God*,” Paul reminds them, has “*reconciled us to Himself through Christ... not counting men’s sins against them.*” God, through Christ, made peace with us. We were enemies of God. Our behavior, our condition, our sin, was alien to His nature. In Christ (by his coming, by his substitutionary death, by his putting human sin away, and taking humanity’s sin to hell, to the grave), we can make peace with God. And then, and only then, can we legitimately, humbly, offer that peace to others.

Thus, reconciliation with God, through Christ, is foundational for our role as peacemakers, offering peace with God to others and serving as agents of reconciliation. The reconciled now reconcile. The experience of oneness with God in Christ by the indwelling Spirit has transformed us. Only reconciled, can we reconcile. To us has been given “*the ministry of reconciliation... God reconciling the world to Himself in Christ*,” with us in the middle, with us as the catalytic agents. “*He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*”

The task is in our hands and quite frankly, we don’t see it. We have not accepted this role. Listen to Paul,

“We are therefore – [on the basis of Christ’s reconciliation, indeed, due to heaven’s investment in us] - Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

What a stunning role! God, appealing through me and you – to kings! To national and international influencers. To common men and women. God reconciling nations, and cities, and enti-

ties, tribes and families, and alienated souls to Himself, with us as His agents - ambassadors.

The Posture of Weakness: The Cross

Reconciliation is possible only through the cross of Christ and at times, from our cross. That is, from the position of weakness and injustice. Our own crucible experiences are sometimes the platform from which we do the ministry of reconciliation. Christ reconciled us at the cross, by the cross and through the cross. Many in the apostolic era followed him, dying for their faith as martyrs, and doing so with their dying breath being a declaration of the faith, a veritable appeal to onlookers and to history, to believe. The Greek word for witness, *martureo*/*martyras*, is martyr. The original word witness, a declaration of faith, evolved into martyr due to the cost of witnessing the death of those who testified for Christ. But their witness could not be silenced. Even from their graves, the blood of the martyrs still speaks.

This is not power speaking to power. This ambassador function is quite different. This is humility speaking. It is brokenness that makes its appeal. It is unconditional love in the face of hatred and injustice. It is trust in the face of manipulation and false dealing. Paul was an ambassador 'in chains,' speaking to kings from a position of imprisonment, yet, forthrightly, with dignity.

We offer amnesty to a world that is hostile to God, one which took the life of Jesus, the Son of God. By amnesty, nations are joined to the Lord. Cities are blessed. Above and beyond amnesty is the offer of adoption, to become the sons and daughters of God. Such an offer is breathtaking. And it is our role to make such an offer.

"We are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:20).

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Review:

1. Consider the ambassador ministry as a representative role. Who does the ambassador represent?
2. How does the ambassador fulfill a critical missional task?
3. The ambassador functions with reconciliation in mind – how does that rise out of the office of priest, and yet, bridge to the office and function of the prophet?
4. The pesky problem – the ambassador and two churches. Representing the cause of unity in a disunified Christian culture. Talk about it.
5. While it is true that people in every city need a church; what is meant by the idea that the city itself needs a church? Are churches for people, or, is the church present for the city? What is the difference?
6. Address the issue of the ambassador in the position of weakness, the ‘ambassador in chains,’ the ambassador and the cross?
7. The ambassador is a ‘witness’ from the kingdom of God, and its earthly embassy, the church, and the danger of the position is emphasized in blood, as the term witness, *martureo*, became simply martyr. What do you make of that, as we enter the shadows of last days’ eschatology?

PART 2

Rediscovering The Idea of Kingdom

Overview:

It is important for us to rediscover the Biblical idea of the kingdom of God, a dominant Biblical theme that the modern American church has forgotten. We seem to have allowed the concept of the church to eclipse that of the kingdom.

The scripture ties the gospel not so much to the church as to the kingdom. The “gospel of the kingdom” has been committed to the church. The church does not promote itself. Rather, it seeks to advance the kingdom of God. It becomes the visible evidence of that invisible kingdom. There is no true good news without the kingdom. Without the reign of God and the hope of a new age, characterized by holiness. We have individualized the gospel, seeing it only in a narrow, personal manner. We miss the great sweep of global redemption and the enthronement of Christ. We truncate the good news, presenting it without the concept of kingdom. Today, the grand theme of the kingdom is ignored or treated as irrelevant. We have pictured salvation as a ticket to heaven, the age to come as disconnected from the earth. With such a view, we are not invested here. We do not have the mindset to be agents of change.

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Redemption was not merely meant to save souls. Creation groans (Rom. 8:22) for liberation from under the weight of sin's penalty. The earth has been given promises that are yet to be fulfilled. "The wilderness and the dry land will be glad; the desert will rejoice and blossom like a wildflower. It will blossom abundantly and will also rejoice with joy and singing" (Isa. 35:1-2a). Creation is animated here, audible, singing for the "glory" of the Lord and reflecting "the splendor of our God." In this day when the earth is redeemed, "water will gush in the wilderness, and streams [will flow] in the desert; the parched ground will become a pool, and the thirsty land [will be full of] springs...A road will be there and a way; it will be called the Holy Way" (35:6-8, CSB). In that day, the wolf and the lamb will be reconciled and a little child shall lead about both a lion and a fat-ted calf (Isa. 11:6). Nature has now been reconciled – it is at peace. This is the effect of redemption.

In essence, this is a picture of kingdom impact on the land, on deserted and abandoned places that have lacked life. It is a picture of hostile agents that no longer preying on the weak. This is a cultural and ecological backdrop that speaks of restoration and peace. This not other-worldly. It is a picture of the transformation of this world.

The ministry of the ambassador embraces this larger picture. It interfaces with kings and kingdoms. We must revive the concept of kingdom to rightly engage the role of ambassadors. They create bridges of understanding with those in political office and with cultural influencers.

We seem to have settled into an adversarial posture with political powers. That might be unavoidable. Paul was in chains for preaching. Yet when he appeared before the governor and king who were responsible for his continued incarceration, Paul was incredibly respectful. The implications of his example are enormous.

We have slipped into an evangelism mode that is deficient in impact. We have promoted the idea of receiving Christ, the Savior, and omitting Christ the Lord and King and His kingdom. The writer of Hebrews declared that we were "receiving a kingdom" (Heb. 12:28).

We married the church and left the kingdom at the altar. Obviously, the church and the kingdom are different, yet conjoined. The Church is the visible expression of the invisible kingdom. Congregations come and go. They rise and fall, open and close, but the kingdom is constant.

As agents of the kingdom, representatives of Christ, we are sent by the Church, which is a kind of embassy of the kingdom. We implore men, especially kings and those with influence, to be reconciled to God. He can no longer be dismissed and set aside. This is not an optional idea that can be ignored.

The Lost Emphasis on the Kingdom

In emphasizing the role of the ambassador, Paul brings to the fore the idea of the kingdom of God. We are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20-21), now, not merely in the future. We are dead, but alive (Rom. 6:11). We have been left on the earth to finish the work of Christ (Rom. 12:1-2) as his kingdom agents.

Living in the fallen house of Adam that has come under the control of the dark Lord Lucifer, we live as lights in the darkness. We carry the story of the lost garden paradise and of the first couple and the spiritual-moral coup that led to their bondage. They are our flesh parents. We inherited their now flawed DNA. We also inherited their status – as slaves to sin and as subject to death. They sold their soul into slavery, and we, their children, were born with the legal status of slaves.

In due time, God came to Adam's house, in Jesus, the Christ. He came with the good news, the gospel of God's kingdom. He offered hope. He demonstrated love – of sinners, of lepers, of children and widows and women and gentiles. As the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), he came to liberate the house of Adam from the consequences of sin and the power of the dark lord, Lucifer, but was rejected as Messiah and king. The

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powers had him killed, but he proved indestructible – and that indestructible spirit is now in us. We are his witnesses, proof that he rose from the dead, that he now rules in exile, that he will return, literally, to the earth. That, one day, the kingdoms of this world will surrender to the kingdom of God.

We are left here to tell his story until it is heard in every corner of this dark house infested with disembodied fallen angels. In the darkness, we whisper the good news, “He is not dead. He is alive. He is coming again. You can know him. He can save you. Repent, renounce this world, and invite him into your heart. Make him your Lord. Switch sides.” Every day, millions do so. And there are, here and there, flashes of light in the darkness, miraculous evidence that Jesus is alive. There are shouts of joy from those being liberated. And groans in the spirit from intercessors who are pressing closed doors open.

Though we often fail to live like this, we are nevertheless called to this task of representing the inbreaking Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14). We are ambassadors of Christ, the rightful ruler of every land, the King of every king, the One worthy of emulation (Colossians 2:10). His, he reminded us, is not a geopolitical kingdom, but one of intangibles, one of the heart (John 18:36).

As noted earlier, we have allowed the concept of church to eclipse that of the kingdom. In the New King James Version, the term *kingdom* is referenced 210 times in the Old Testament and 155 times in the New Testament. It appears 369 times in the King James version. The Greek term *basileia*, translated as kingdom, is found 162 times in the New Testament. The Bible is a book about kingdoms. The word ‘kingdom’ is found fifty-five times in Matthew; twenty times in Mark; forty-six times in Luke, and five times in John. The phrase ‘the Kingdom of God’ and equivalent expressions (e.g., ‘Kingdom of heaven,’ ‘His kingdom’) occur about eighty times. Not a few scholars have suggested that the ‘kingdom’ is the dominant theme of

the teaching of Jesus.¹¹

In contrast, the term church appears in the gospels only twice, and only in Matthew. It is a term uttered by Jesus alone. It appears in the New Testament 120 times. Jesus declared that he would build his church, *ecclesia*. The New Testament refers to believers as a *temple* of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), and John speaks of those who are members of the *synagogue* of Satan (Rev. 2:9). But neither of these two terms – temple nor synagogue – are used in a *primary* sense for believers.

The term *ecclesia*, church, was a secular term. It referred to the power of ordinary Roman citizens. Two or three of them could gather, invoke the name of Caesar, and demand that Roman law and custom be enforced. They could assert their citizen rights. The force of both Caesar's name and law was at their disposal. This is the idea that Jesus seems to employ. "Do you think Caesar's name has power? That Rome's law is authoritative?" So, we often say, without understanding our own words, "There is power in the name of Jesus!"

The church is not a building, not a place to meet, not a structure with a steeple. In its simplest form it is "*two or three gathered in the name of Jesus*" (Mt. 18:20) for the purpose of advocating for and advancing his kingdom. It is not fixed and stationary but mobile and dynamic. It is here and there, as believers connect for kingdom purposes, as they seek to lift up the name of Jesus as king, and advance his rightful rule in hearts, a kingdom characterized by righteousness, peace and joy (Rom. 14:17). We are ambassadors of the kingdom, and as we act as ambassadors, we are never more like a true *ecclesia*.

In Acts, the church, obscure in the gospels, comes to the fore. It is mentioned in the NKJV, 24 times, with the term kingdom occurring only eight times. In the epistles of Paul, the

¹¹ See: <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-study-course/bible-study-course-lesson-6/the-kingdom-in-the-gospels>. Also: Vol. III, Zondervan, 1976, p. 804.

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term church is mentioned 71 times, contrasted with the term kingdom, used in various ways, found 14 times. In Revelation, the term church appears 20 times. Still, kingdom is dominate overall with 155 mentions, 369 in both testaments, compared to 120 mentions of the term church. The kingdom is the great backdrop against which the church rises. You cannot understand the church apart from that great framework.

Notice again, that the ministry of Jesus begins with an emphasis on the kingdom (Luke 4:43; Luke 8:1) and ends with the challenge to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the ends of the earth (Matthew 24:14). The book of Acts begins with Jesus talking to the disciples about the kingdom (Acts 1:3) and ends with the kingdom message being preached in Rome (28:31). The church is the time-space agent of this kingdom. It is an extension of the kingdom of heaven on the earth. On foreign soil, like an embassy, it is subject to the laws of its homeland. It is representative. It is a bridge between two governments. The church is not the kingdom but its agent. The church, in influence and vigor, rises and falls, advances and retreats, backslides and is revived, but the kingdom is constant. The reign of God knows no ebb and flow.

We detach the term *gospel* from the phrase, ‘*gospel of the kingdom*.’ We privatize faith and salvation. The witness we are called to give is that articulated by Peter in Acts 2, and by Paul in Romans. It is a judicial declaration of the deserved wrath of God on nations (Acts 2:23, 36-38; Romans 1:18), for the crucifixion and wrongful death of Jesus. Peter’s message was cold, blunt facts coupled with a stunning offer of forgiveness and grace. The book of Acts records this witness before the people, the Sanhedrin, the scribes and pharisees, and ultimately kings. The church is the community called to give this witness and to be a haven for those who join God’s family – a community of heaven on earth, a group of pilgrims living now in exile as a missional community.

Kingdom Ambassadors and Character

The role of any ambassador is to represent the Sovereign that commissioned them and to whom they report. This is, in a sense, the role of all disciples. Yet, there are qualities that make some people uniquely competent for this role. We'll talk about those later. I am suggesting that each congregation, denomination, or the collective "Church of the city" should consider specially trained persons to serve as ambassadors – to the mayor, to magistrates, judges, councilpersons, and to people who have influence due to their position or wealth. The ambassador needs a kind of 'stately grace.' Humility is key. Authenticity is equally important.

These ambassadors will interface with 'kings and kingdoms,' or locally, with 'mayors and magistrates' and the like (Matthew 10:18; 1 Timothy 2:1-4). Their role, however, is not that of an evangelist, per se, not first and foremost. At times, we have led with truth to the exclusion of love. We have made evangelism about the presentation of propositional truth with the goal of forcing a quick decision for Christ. Certainly, we want kings and men and women of influence to follow Christ. We, however, have attempted to deliver the heavy content of truth without building a bridge of love.

Paul noted, in writing to the Corinthians, who had readily embraced spiritual gifts, that there was something more foundational and important, and that was the prerequisite of love. This is the essence of relationship itself. Love is the bridge over which truth must travel. Heavy truth demands a stout bridge, and building strong bridges takes time. Do you love your city? Or do you merely live in a house convenient to transportation, shopping and recreational options? Do you love those who serve and make the city function smoothly, or do you take them for granted? What about the folks who keep it safe? Do you show, in any way, your appreciation for them? Are you a good neighbor? Is the church a blessing to the community in which it resides?

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God, the trinitarian God of the Bible, is a relational community of three. The Father, Son and the Spirit did not have a chance meeting at the edge of the universe where they decided to create a corporation, start a church and do ministry together. *What they do* is out of *who they are*, their being, their relational and trinitarian bond. The Father loves the Son; the Son loves the Father (John 3:35; 5:20; Romans 15:30). And the Spirit is himself the spirit of love (Galatians 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 5:5; Colossians 3:14; 1:8). “*Being*” is their essence. Three persons, they are one God.

We are a nation of ‘doers.’ But *doing* in the kingdom of God stands on and rises out of the ground of *being* – and the state of that being is love. From love, grace flows. From it comes gentleness and joy. It is, by nature, peaceable. It is, in character, holy. These are also the character traits of God’s ambassadors. It is a stately role requiring maturity and poise, decorum and dignity.

Paul may have been a member of the Sanhedrin – the affluent group of Jewish leaders that formed a kind of council for the high priest and the nation. If not, he certainly, being trained by Gamaliel, knew the protocols of the synagogue world. He understood the role and function of a rabbi, and the demands of the law as a Pharisee. That made him an effective ambassador to Jewish synagogues throughout the diaspora. He spoke Hebrew and he knew the culture of the Hebrew synagogue and the workings of the Jerusalem temple. Yet, raised in a Gentile city, he also knew Greek and Roman culture. He was able to transcend cultures, to relate across a broader continuum than, for example, Peter. He was an ambassador of heaven, of another king and kingdom. That is where his loyalty lay – and so it must be with us in our ambassador function.

Kingly Ambassadors Respecting Power

If you notice Paul, for example, before kings, is patient and persuasive, pleading with a hint of tenderness in the text. He

is respectful. *“Then Paul, after the governor [Felix] had nodded to him to speak, answered: ‘Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself’”* (Acts 24:10). Felix heard Paul’s testimony, his defense and explanation of Christianity, and *“having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings”* promising to make a decision on the matter (24:22-23). He gave orders for Paul to have liberty and allowed him to have visitors and friends. Paul’s manner had won him trust and respect, and additional hearings.

After some days, Felix brought his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and *“he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ”* (Acts 24:24).

“He reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come,” and the Holy Spirit obviously began a work on the heart of Felix. The governor “was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time, I will call for you’” (24:25).

He was fighting conviction and his own carnality. Luke said, *“he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him”* (24:26).

Nevertheless, he continued the encounters with Paul, sending for him often and conversing with him – but never responding to the appeal of the Spirit to be converted. One wonders what would have happened, where would the narrative have gone, if Felix and Drusilla had confessed Christ and released Paul.

Before King Agrippa, Paul was also respectful. *“I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore, I beg you to hear me patiently”* (Acts 26:2-3). Here is joy, a positive disposition. Here is gratitude for the opportunity to be heard. Here is an affirmation of the expertise and knowledge of Agrippa, *“You are expert in all customs and ques-*

tions.” Here is the appeal for patience, and the obvious demonstration of composure. This should inform our approach and disposition as ambassadors.

The Kingdom’s Secret Agent: The Holy Spirit

As Paul systematically gave his testimony, at one point, Festus, listening to Paul along with King Agrippa, exploded. *“Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!”* (Acts 26:24). In truth, it was Festus who was beside himself with conviction, barely resisting the claims of the truth of the gospel. Paul, gracefully, but forcefully responded, *“I am not mad,”* – but notice the poise of Paul, the respectful tone in his response to a governor. He calls him *“most noble Festus,”* while insisting that he was offering *“words of truth and reason”* (26:25).

Amazingly, he then appealed to Agrippa. He seems to sense that Agrippa might be closer to a decision for Christ than Festus. Influencing him, he might win them both. *“For the king,”* addressing Agrippa, *“before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner”* (26:24). Moving Agrippa to openly affirm the truth of these things to Festus, he would make Agrippa both a convert and an evangelist in the same moment. Amazing.

The conviction of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these political rulers was palpable. Festus, as he had before, was openly struggling to free himself from the arresting presence of the Holy Spirit. Paul certainly sensed the work of the Spirit. Back and forth, between the two, he boldly, but respectfully, called for a spiritual decision. *“King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets?”* And then nudging him, positively, he asserted, *“I know that you do believe”* (Acts 26:27). This is Paul, as ambassador-evangelist. He was attempting to help Agrippa with a faith declaration. On

behalf of the king, he asserts, “*I know that you do believe!*” Paul was no doubt sensing the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of two powerful political Roman leaders. He was not adversarial, but conciliatory. He did not draw a line, but a circle – one into which he stepped on their behalf.

“*Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You almost persuaded me to become a Christian’*” (Acts 26:28). The line has echoed through the ages, “*almost persuaded.*” Paul responded, “*I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains*” (Acts 26:28-29). The audience would have been significant in this open court. Luke offers a hint, that in Paul’s appeal to Agrippa, he hoped to also win Festus, perhaps Drusilla, and “*all who hear me today.*” He was not intimidated; nor did he attempt to be intimidating. He was both stately and gracious, though in chains.

A prisoner, he spoke with dignity, with fervency, without shame or disgrace. Dishonored, he spoke with self-respect and esteem. He spoke with a kind of nobility worthy of an ambassador. He became an equal to the powers to which he spoke, an instructor without challenging their power – chained, he was free. He ‘almost persuaded the king’ to become a Christian. He unhinged the governor who was fearful at times in his presence. Not due to Paul, obviously, but due to the Holy Spirit who was witnessing through him.

Kingdom Sobriety: Full of the Spirit

Interfacing with the elite and the powerful of the culture – whether locally, nationally or globally - we dare not become intoxicated with their power or wealth, their position or prosperity. We need clear heads, objectivity. Coming under the influence of their power, or currying their favor or approval, we deny our high calling and the status of the King and kingdom we represent. We would betray our belief that our rewards, though out of this world, nev-

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ertheless, dwarf anything that might be offered to us here.

When the Syrian military general, Naaman, returned to Elisha, having been healed of leprosy, he sought to reward the prophet, but Elisha refused to accept his gifts. Elisha's servant, Gehazi, came under the spell of Naaman's offer and ran after him (2 Kings 5:15-16; 19-23). He collected a reward only to be smitten with the leprosy from which Naaman was healed.

Ambassadors traverse in two worlds, between two thrones and two different value systems. Between the now and the eternal, between seen outcomes and the unseen hand of God. They understand both the language of heaven and earth, of the spiritual and the carnal, of the nuances of the culture to which they are sent. They discern the mood of the Holy Spirit who accompanies them on every mission. He whispers to ambassadors what they are to say, and how they are to say it (Colossians 4:3).

"When they deliver you up [before kings], take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak" (Matthew 10:18).

"When they bring you, betrayed, into court, don't worry about what you'll say. When the time comes, say what's on your heart—the Holy Spirit will make his witness in and through you" (Mark 13:11).

When you are before kings, *"take no thought"* – that is, don't worry, *"it shall be given to you... what you shall speak."* Summoned to appear in court? Before a powerful ruler – you stay cool! Who does that? In that regal, legal chamber, *"We are witnesses... and so also is the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 5:32). We are not alone in our call to witness.

Believers will increasingly be brought before rulers in the last days. But this has always been true throughout church history. The people of God have been compelled before kings and magistrates. Jesus emphasized this fact, seeing it as an opportunity for witness. Nevertheless, we dare not wait until we are *compelled* by kings and

courts. We are *commanded*, by God, *compelled* by heaven, to “go into all the world, with all authority” (Mark 16:15-20; Matthew 28:18). To “preach the gospel of the kingdom to nations” (Matthew 24:14; 28:19).

The Alternative Kingdom – Here and Now

Jesus declared, “My kingdom is not of this world,” (John 18:36). And yet, Jesus declared of the kingdom, “You won’t be able to say, ‘Here it is!’ or ‘It’s over there!’ For the Kingdom of God is already among you” (Luke 17:21). Or as numerous translations say, the kingdom of God “is within you” (KJV; ASV; Aramaic, Douay-Rheims, ERV, God’s Word, Good News, LSV, New Heart, Weymouth, Young’s Literal). He is in you, “because of My presence” (Amplified).

Christianity is viewed by some as a *decision* one makes so that they might go to heaven. Such a view cannot be disconnected from the countermovement God desires in the earth. A movement led by transformed people who are followers of “the way,” a different way, a new approach to living, to believing and behaving, to belonging and becoming. Jesus came preaching the gospel of the *kingdom* at the beginning of his ministry and never stopped. He finished his time on the earth speaking to his disciples about the *kingdom* (Acts 1:3). The great commission is the command to preach *the gospel of the kingdom* (Matthew 24:14; 28:19). It is not merely *good news*. It cannot be detached from the present call to the Lordship of Christ and an obedient life or from the eschatological and anticipated, inbreaking reign of Christ at his return.

The writer of Hebrews (12:28), declared that we have received “a kingdom that cannot be shaken.” It is already here, though invisible. Thrones may rise and fall, emperors will come and go, but the invisible Kingdom of God will not fall. In the end, it will prevail. It is not geo-political as was Israel’s kingdom. It is not about borders and conquests, armies and legal wranglings. It is

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a kingdom established in the hearts of men and women, manifesting as righteousness or justice, fairness and equity, peace (shalom, wholeness, health), and joy (Romans 14:17). Not human joy, but heaven's joy imported (Neh. 8:10; John 15:11; Psalm 16:11). Not earthly, fragile peace, but the peace of God which comes by peace with God and makes us peacemakers – offering amnesty to those who want to come home to God, the Father (2 Thess. 3:16; John 14:27; Isaiah 26:3; Philippians 4:7; Matt. 5:9).

We have not received the gospel and consequently salvation – that is, soul salvation alone, a privatized and narrow personal faith. We have received salvation that is grand and glorious, a loud and public salvation. And though that is a highly personal matter, it cannot be kept concealed. It makes us salty salt, and invasive, intrusive light (Matthew 5:13-16). The biblical gospel must be *the gospel of the kingdom* (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1; Matthew 4:23; 9:35). We have not only received Christ, but we have also received a king, and his kingdom. It is a kingdom from which the gospel, the good news, must not be detached; and conversely, one in which the good news is not complete unless it announces the kingdom.

The kingdom is at the heart of the good news, otherwise, we are left in a fallen and rebellious world, without hope. The kingdom is a dimension of God's reign that we experience now, and yet, only as a taste of what is to come. It is both here and now, and it is also coming. The Church is the visible agency of this kingdom. Congregations and pastors come and go. They rise and fall. Churches open and close, they grow and decline. They exist, far too often, on the back of a pastor and his popular personality. But the kingdom is about Christ himself. Its churches ebb and flow, but the current of the kingdom, like an ever-flowing river, is constant.

"If my kingdom were of this world," Jesus declared, *"my servants would have been fighting."* At one point, Peter considered fighting, but

quickly realized that attempting to prevent the arrest of Jesus and his crucifixion was futile. For that purpose, Jesus had told him earlier, he had come. This is, then, a unique kingdom. It is not militant or confrontational, not physical or violent. This kingdom, Jesus asserted, “*is not of this world*” (NLT). The NIV says, “*My kingdom is from another place.*” It is “*not of this realm*” (NASB). It is here, but it is “*not from here,*” the Christian Standard Bible says bluntly.

We, as ambassadors, represent this intangible, invisible kingdom that is unlike and alien to the kingdoms of this world. And we represent the values, the character of this alien kingdom (Matt. 5). We are in this fallen world-system, but we are not of it (John 17:16). We are to be “*as shrewd as serpents [unlike Adam and Eve] and as harmless as doves*” (Matthew 10:16). Harmless is the idea of being simple and sincere. Without guile. Our work is bound to the character of simplicity and innocence, of nonviolence and purity. We take the message of our King to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), and we implore men, especially kings and those in authority, those with influence, to be reconciled to God.

Review:

1. Talk about the church contrasted with the kingdom. Why does the concept of the church today eclipse the idea of the kingdom?
2. The gospel, in scripture, is the ‘gospel of the kingdom.’ Why have we dropped the concept of kingdom, and separated it from the good news message? Why do we obviously see it as irrelevant?
3. Ambassadors interface with kings and kingdoms. Why doesn’t the church have ambassadors who create bridges of understanding with those in power and political office, even those who are cultural influencers?
4. We seem to have settled into an adversarial posture with political powers. Paul was in chains for preaching,

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but when he appeared before the governor and king, responsible for his incarceration – he seemed incredibly respectful. What do you make of that? And what are the implications of his example to us?

5. What do you think is meant in this chapter by a ‘loud and public salvation?’ And what is meant by the idea that we have not only received Christ – but a king, and a kingdom?
6. How are the church and the kingdom different, for example, on the continuum of time and space, in history? Discuss this – Churches, the visible expression of the invisible kingdom – come and go, rise and fall, but the kingdom is constant.
7. We implore men, kings and those with influence, to be reconciled to God. Are we doing that? Intentionally?

PART 3

Exploring The Ambassador Role

Overview:

The church is not the kingdom, and the kingdom is not the church, and yet, they exist as two sides of the same coin. In the time and space in which we now work, the church has eclipsed the kingdom.

The gospel, in scripture, is the 'gospel of the kingdom.' We dare not drop the concept of kingdom and separate it from the good news message. In doing so, we fracture the gospel. Consequently, we are left with something less than the gospel was intended to be. We obviously, but incorrectly, see the kingdom nature of the gospel as irrelevant.

Ambassadors interface with kings and kingdoms. The church, through ambassadors, creates bridges of understanding with those in power and political office, with those who are cultural influencers.

Utilizing extraction evangelism, evangelism primarily as preparation for eternity, we foster a withdrawn version of a Christian. Focusing on eternity, we allow a spiritual void to remain unaddressed, disbelieving that cities or nations can change. Christianity is a 'now' faith. It cannot be only for another time and place. Other worldly in orientation, we settle for an adversarial posture with political powers. We fail in our obligation to speak truth to power, to see the conversion

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of those whose position and influence is capable of wielding cultural impact. Paul was in chains for preaching, but when he appeared before the governor and king, responsible for his incarceration – he was incredibly respectful. What do you make of that? And what are the implications of his example to us?

What do you think is meant in this chapter by a ‘loud and public salvation?’ And what is meant by the idea that we have not only received Christ – but a king, and a kingdom?

How are the church and the kingdom different, for example, on the continuum of time and space, in history? Discuss this – Churches, the visible expression of the invisible kingdom – come and go, rise and fall, but the kingdom is constant.

We implore men, kings and those with influence, to be reconciled to God. Are we doing that? Intentionally?

The Ambassador – In Christ’s Stead

The ambassador never speaks for himself, or by himself. Everywhere, the ambassadors of heaven are, Paul argues, to allow “*God to make his appeal through us,*” imploring others on Christ’s behalf, “*Be reconciled to God*” (2 Cor. 5:20). The New Living Translation translates the message as more direct. We say to men, to kings, to governments, the nations, “*Come back to God!*”

Back to the Creator; to the Redeemer

We act on behalf of Christ, in His stead – and that is a powerful position. The ancient English term was *legate*, also understood as a *messenger*. The 1611 edition of the Bible first used the term, *ambassador*. The word was derived from the medieval Latin *ambasciator*. Shakespeare used the word and popularized it. It came to prominence in the international dealings of France

and Spain during the reign of Elizabeth. The ambassador was the link between thrones and kingdoms, and so are we.

The term, ambassador, has a rich etymological heritage. From Medieval Latin, *ambasciātor*, is derived from the Latin, *ambiasciāre*, meaning to communicate, send a message, or an envoy. The Old High German, *ambabt*, means service – a mission or errand. Its Proto-Indo-European meaning is “to drive around.” The ambassador is an out-and-about kind of person, on a mission, meeting and greeting.

This is the opposite of the cloistered church that engages in extraction evangelism. With the ministry of the ambassador, God puts on a face and goes public. This is the essence of the incarnation. God wrapped Himself in flesh, and walked through the villages of Judea, Samaria and Galilee. He was out and about – ‘driving around,’ if you will. The evangelical church must come out of the shadows and again engage the city, its leaders, the nation, and do so in a ‘good news’ fashion.

Paul notes that we are “*ambassadors not only ‘for’ Christ,*” but “*on Christ’s behalf.*” We go “*in Christ’s stead,*” in his place. The representative role, “*for Christ,*” is noble. But there is more. We are not merely representative ambassadors; we are here to function in the position and role for which Jesus himself was sent. We are finishing his work. That is an altogether higher standard. We represent him to a world that rejected him. We report, contrary to popular belief, that he is alive, and that he has an offer of amnesty to nations, to peoples, to kings and individuals.

Amnesty is from the Greek, *amnesia*. It is oblivion, in this case, divine forgetfulness. It is a legislative or executive act, thus a legal matter, by which a state restores rights and privileges, freedom and access, to parties who have been judged guilty of a crime, or some offense, against the state or its citizens. In a judicial act, the state declares the guilty innocent. It pardons. It liberates. It creates the basis for a new beginning. Amnesty

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goes beyond a pardon. A pardon keeps a record, but amnesty, with its amnesia, obliterates the record of offense.

Amnesty is a feature of Jubilee – the forgiveness of debts, the return of lost family land, the release of slaves, the privilege of ‘going home.’ *Divine Amnesty* is a spiritual release, good news, the arrival of a new order, orchestrated by God, Almighty. It is made possible by the sacrifice of the Son. It is administered by the Spirit. God divinely exempts those who accept His offer from condemnation and future punishment. We are saved – from hell, from a life of deprivation and evil, from ourselves – to “the way,” a new way to think and believe, to behave and belong, to love and be loved.

God acts, in His courtroom, to save, to liberate, and then to reconcile the one responding to His offer of amnesty. For this reason, Jesus, the Christ came. He came knowing he would be rejected, utterly rejected – indeed, crucified. Risen from the dead, ascended, exalted into heaven, and having sent forth the Spirit to us to indwell us and anoint us for service, we are now empowered to again offer forgiveness upon repentance, and salvation.

We do this work of the ambassador “*on His account*.” The scholars say this is different. It may seem to some, slight and insignificant variance of meaning, but the language is more than a nuanced difference. The NIV reads, “*God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled...*” The ambassador is carrying a direct message, “*God [is] beseeching ... by us*,” by our pleading with the other “*in Christ’s stead*,” as if we were him. This is highly personal. This is not generic deputation work. The NKJV describes the ambassador role for Christ as “*God... pleading through us*.” The pleading of God is demonstrated as “*we implore you on Christ’s behalf*.” This is a dual work “*for Christ*,” coupled with his “pleading, imploring *through us*...” The work of the Holy Spirit is implied here. We are not merely representing Christ in some detached manner. Christ is repre-

sending himself, through us, in us, as we stand before the other as his ambassador, and do so, led by the Spirit, praying.

The Ambassador – And Intercession

The King James 2000 notes that the ambassador role is “*God beseeching another by us, and our praying, interceding, on Christ’s behalf.*” You cannot escape the cemented connection between the role of the ambassador and the function of intercession enabled by the Holy Spirit. The World English Bible says we are ambassadors *on behalf of Christ*, God *entreating us*, saying to another, “*We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*”¹² The believer-ambassador is between the intercession of Christ and the intercessory enabling of the Spirit. We are ambassadors *on behalf of Christ* - that is the role, the position. But the *power* of the function is released as God is “*making his appeal through us*,” imploring the one to whom we talk, to be reconciled to Him.

We speak and pray, speaking prayerfully, that is, in and out of a spirit of prayer, to others. We pray, even as we stand before another, and speak out of what God gives us in the moment. We are in a triangle – God, us and the other. God, the Holy Spirit, helps us both pray and speak at the same time. God, the Holy Spirit, connects us to the Father, by his Son who died, pleading with the other to be reconciled to their true Father – telling them how much the father loves them and misses them. Christ is praying as heaven’s intercessor to the Father for this one and that one. We are in the middle, joining Christ in his intercession, aided by the Holy Spirit. We are as Ben Jennings, the great Campus Crusade for Christ prayer leader, observed, “being squeezed into a space in the Trinity.” We are in the middle of God’s redemptive activity. Prayer, intercession, enables

¹² The American King James Version says we do this “in Christ’s stead.” The ASV, “on behalf of Christ.” The Early Modern translations (Geneva, Bishops’ Bible, Coverdale, Tyndale) all read “in Christ’s stead.” Literal Translations (LSV, Berean Literal, Young’s) read “in behalf of Christ” [Berean, ‘on behalf of’]. Smith’s Literal reads, “for the sake of.”

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the connection between the lost son or daughter and the Father – though the Son, by his intercession, and by the Spirit, allowing us to join Jesus in prayer - now. What a role!

There has been an exaggerated emphasis on intercession as spiritual warfare. Intercessors are often taught to engage the enemy, as if their role was hunting down and ferreting out the demonic, as if a city or hamlet, or for that matter a holy institution, a church, could be freed of the demonic by decrees and declarations, by binding and loosing. It is as if the Evil One bears all the blame for sin and rebellion. The thesis is simple: Get rid of the devil and demons – and Walla, we're good.

We must reassess such a position, and redirect intercession to its first, primary and greatest function - reconciliation. The first movement in intercession is not toward the darkness, but toward the light. The intercessor is first an agent of Christ before anything else. Only out of reconciliation with Christ, and our deep connection with Him, can we move to reconcile others. And then, if necessary, we have the authority to deal with their enemy and ours. Our success is not measured in the force of our resistance to the devil or the dispelling of the darkness, but in the degree to which we have submitted ourselves to God (James 4:7).

It is not the force of our resistance that wins the battle with the darkness, but the degree of nearness to God, the depth of our submission. Such nearness is the source of our authority. Yet, we draw near to God, not merely to have power to resist the devil, but that by our closeness we might be remade into His image. That our hands might be cleansed to handle holy things, and our hearts purified, and our minds singular in devotion and decisiveness. That we might have tender hearts with the capacity to weep and empathize with others. That we might know humility apart from groveling, dignity that is nonetheless unpretentious. That God might trust us and exalt us to a place from which we both glorify Him and fulfill our earthly purpose (James 4:6-10).

If necessary, when necessary, we engage the enemy, resisting him and seeing him flee. We do so on behalf of others and in the stead of Christ – with relationships and reconciliation in view. It may be fun to see demons flee, but heaven does not rejoice over such things. It rejoices over the reconciliation of men to God (Luke 15:10).

The Ambassador's Plea: A Prayer

We should pause to understand prayer as a *plea*. The term is used generously in scripture, depending on the translation one consults. Biblehub.com locates the term 256 times in various translations. The Living Bible, 120 times. The NASB, 90 times, while the Message only uses the term eleven times, and the American Standard, 22 times. A *plea* is often used as a legal term. In court, one enters a *plea*. They plead guilty or innocent. For mercy or for a continuance or some other consideration.

A *plea* is a prayer offered in court – it is a legal term. It can be in the court of a king or that of a magistrate, even a Justice of the Peace. By implication, we offer pleas, prayers, before God, in the courtroom of heaven. We may be pleading for ourselves or for another. This is an act of intercession whereby we enter heaven's courtroom to offer a plea in behalf of another – as a friend of the court. In intercession, we are always between the two – the court and some plaintiff. Like an attorney, back and forth, we negotiate, seeking a solution that satisfies justice and brings relief to the parties involved.

Adam was created for this middle on behalf of all creation – but he fell. It was to this middle that God called Abram. It was from this bloody middle that he prayed through the night, offering a blood covenant on behalf of children that were not yet born, and land for them. God answered his plea and gave him the promise of both children and the land (Genesis 15). It was into this same middle that he was thrust in intercession

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for Lot and the cities of the plain (Genesis 18:20-33). In this middle, King David was caught in a spiritual battle for the city of Jerusalem (2 Samuel. 24:16-25). David built an altar, offered a sacrifice, and essentially drew a blood line of protection sparing the city. A plague was stopped, and the destroyer angel returned his sword to its sheath. On that site, Solomon would build the temple, with its bloody altar, where Israel would meet God daily. We are called to this disputed, contested middle, a bloody middle, and our staying power, our prevailing in prayer, may save a soul or a city. Few things have more consequences.

The ambassador pleads, prayerfully standing before another – a king, an earthly court, or magistrate, etc. He is the legate, the legal representative of one court, heaven's court, to another. He is the representative of the embassy, the church, the *ecclesia*, to an earthly authority. This is not a political act, it is an intercessory act, a prayerful action.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "*We pray on Christ's behalf.*" Jesus is the true intercessor. He is the one who is always pleading on behalf of humanity. In the middle, before the Father, he prays for humanity. With the convicting work of the Spirit and our witness as earthly spokespersons and advocates, Jesus prays. Don't forget, Jesus, a man, now shares a throne with God, the Father, who is also pleading. This may seem strange, but this is the disposition of the Trinity – Christ is doing what the Father does, and the Spirit, in complete harmony, joins the Father and the Son, pleading – with humanity. What a mind-boggling, upside-down principle we find here. Not man pleading with God, but God pleading with men – "*be reconciled.*"

Paul says, "*the Spirit makes intercession...*" (Romans 8:26). Christ pleads because God, the Father, pleads – it is their nature, out of love, to plead with sinners. As the Father pleads, Christ is also pleading. His intercession, before the Father, is on our behalf. That is, it is on behalf of this fallen world and those He seeks to redeem. We, in our greatest role, join in that in-

tercession. Out of this heavenly courtroom and its moments of divine pleading, we serve as ambassadors of God's desire for reconciliation with humanity. It is as if we, as privileged ambassadors, have come near the throne of God to hear the pleading of the Trinity for humans to be saved. And we are moved by the sound and the scene of such prayer and then caught up in the cause. We are compelled to share with kings and nobles, indeed, with common men and women, what we have witnessed – a God who cares, a God who pleads for His Creation to return to Him.

Think about the dynamics of pleading. The one pleading is most often in the inferior position. A plea is from the disempowered to the powerful, from the vanquished to the victor. The king, the noble, the one empowered by wealth and in the seat of power are in the dominant position. He has the power of command and does not need to plead. He can command. Yet, here, God takes this position of weakness, of the inferior, instead of the position of power.

Conversion, you understand, cannot be coercive. As ambassadors, we offer the 'witness' of the crucified, yet resurrected Christ. We offer Christ, the lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. We plead for this Christ to be considered, for repentance and the turning of the individual to Christ in order to be reconciled to God.

The decision, though empowered by grace, is, for the moment, in the hands of the hearer – and in that moment it appears that they have a choice. In truth, there is no other option, no other way of salvation, no other name whereby men must be saved (Acts 4:12). In truth, there is no choice *between*, that is, between heaven and hell. Or between light and darkness, between salvation and being lost. Christ has come, and the ambassador has been sent, because we had *no choice*. We were, by our sin, infected with the workings of death, and in the position of being alienated from God and facing eternity without Him. We

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were bound, needing freedom. In the darkness, needing light. As ambassadors, agents of reconciliation, of peace, we offer a window of hope, of amnesty, of life, for change, because those to whom we speak have no other hope.

It is the nature of God to appeal to us to accept the offer of amnesty, which ends in reconciliation, on the grounds of love and grace. In that moment, the frail human can still resist and say, “No,” even to God! He can remain unrepentant before a pleading God. But it is not God who is on trial.¹³ It is not God who is the weak one, hoping that someone will ‘open the door’ to Him, and invite Him in. Even the capacity to hear, to consciously consider, to turn and repent is a matter of grace – of timely grace. It is an offer of grace that may not be available tomorrow. *“Today is the day of salvation”* (2 Corinthians 6:2).

The scholars say this transcends “all human precedent and pattern.” Here the “place of the suppliant and of the supplicated [are] inverted,” and the “Love upon the Throne bends down to ask [love] of the rebel that lies powerless and sullen at His feet...”¹⁴ God is pleading, through the ambassador, in a tender and insane manner, respecting the freewill and initiative of the sinner. God knows the seemingly powerful of the world “is not conquered until his heart be won...”¹⁵ Conversion must be a matter of love – not only alignment with truth, not rote repentance over wrongs.

The Ambassador and the Heart of God - Love

Only love can heal the sinner’s heart and empower him to “put away all the bitterness out of his heart and come back to the love and the grace” that God is “ready to pour over him.”¹⁶ This is why the work of an ambassador is so different from that of the

¹³ Maclaren’s Exposition. Commentary on 2 Cor. 5:20. See: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/5-20.htm.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

prophet or the confrontational evangelism that we have known. It is stunning that God, in Christ, is praying for the redemption of kings and those in authority so that as a result of their conversion, at least in part, men and women on the earth might live peaceable lives, having been reconciled to God, through Christ.

The scholars say, “He that might the vengeance best have taken, finds out the remedy.” And “He against whom we have transgressed prays us to be reconciled; and the Infinite Love lowers Himself in that lowering which is, in another aspect, the climax of His exaltation, to pray the rebels to accept His amnesty.”¹⁷ MacLaren says this is something “very near His [God’s] heart.” God’s longing that humanity should put away their enmity with Him is not a mere desire for God – it is the character of God and the disposition of His broken heart over humanity’s sin. Here is the “transcendent and wonderful... the all-perfect, self-sufficing God... made glad” by the prospect of being reconciled to a sinner.

Think of our too-often, cool disposition toward someone who has been lost to us relationally. We are prone to move on with our lives, “I have done all I can do,” we say, dismissively. We are not purposely cold, but we cannot be hostage to the recalcitrance of another, even a loved one, we reason. But God, it seems, takes quite the opposite position. He cannot, it seems, walk away so easily. His weakness is His love.

The Master, Jesus, “*who is His image... saw the travail of His [own] soul.*” Both Father and Son are smitten over their love for fallen humanity, and they bid us to go, *in their stead*. Think about this. We dare not be prideful or presumptuous, but this role is one in which we lift our shoulders, stick out our chest, and lift up our countenance, and wearing the glory of God on the back of humility, we go in the place of, in the stead of Christ. We go, as God was in Christ going, weeping for humanity, “satisfied,

¹⁷ MacLaren’s Exposition. Commentary on 2 Cor. 5:20. See: https://bible-hub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/5-20.htm.

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when the man lets the warmth of God's love in Christ thaw away the coldness out of his heart... and kindle there an answering flame," so MacLaren says.¹⁸ What wonderful language.

The great gift we give God in salvation is not repentance alone. The "greater pleasure" that obliges God's very heart is that we "trust in Him as a God of love." He has descended to the humiliation of the cross to elicit our love – and yet, human hearts remain cold. How is that possible? The darkness, we must realize, is darker than we imagine. The deafness to the Spirit is more pronounced. The numbness is almost complete, and the sleep is very deep.

Yet, "so intense is the divine desire to win the world to His love"¹⁹ that He has condescended to take on the form of man, of a servant, and He has gathered our sins to Himself, and tasted death, and entered hell. He could descend no further in His mad attempt to seize us and deliver us from sin and its slavery.

It cannot be overlooked that Paul ties the idea of ambassador to the language of atonement. We are, before kings and those to whom we appeal, those in positions of power and influence, representatives of the vicarious character of Christ's redemptive work and claim on the earth. We dare not forget, in this equation, in the moment of our audience with men and women of note and renown, the love of God. It is that love that overflowed in the abundant and generous impartation of life called Creation, and in the compassionate sending of the Son, and his vicarious atonement, "*God so loved... that He gave...*"

The work of the ambassador may at times parse truth, but it is always tethered to love. Bloody and costly love. God is not attempting to reconcile Himself; but to tender an offer to humanity about the grounds of their reconciliation to Him. He does not change. It is we who must change. It is kings, those

¹⁸ MacLaren's Exposition. Commentary on 2 Cor. 5:20. See: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/5-20.htm.

¹⁹ Ibid.

who are found raging in Psalm 2, who must “*kiss the son*.” The wrath of God is being restrained, and a pardon is available, amnesty is being offered, nations are at risk. The work is no small and trivial matter.

It is a “*passionate entreaty*.” A prayerful plea. Again, the role of the ambassador cannot be disconnected from prayer, from the office of Christ as intercessor. As the ambassador meets with the king, the magistrate, the mayor – Jesus is praying. Not a bad prayer partner! For this moment, to see nations, by the office of their leader, by the openness and disposition of the heart of that leader, joined to the Lord, is what Christ died for.

The Ambassador’s Beseeching God

The very idea of our work as ambassadors is a revelation of the tenderness of the heart of God. The words, “*as though God did beseech*,” reveal a beseeching God. This sets Him in a different class than the pagan gods, those of either Greek or Rome or any other people. On the other side of this tender, beseeching God, is the mystery of men with hard, resistant, proud hearts. Men who persist in their defiance of God. Men who challenge Him. Men who see themselves as His equal, having therefore, no idea who He is. Unlike the pagan deities who are the shadows of mortals cast heavenward; this God is incomparable. He is past finding out. He is transcendent and ultimately unknowable. He is mystery, compounded.

We must, MacLaren notes, recall Christ, weeping over Jerusalem, with “tears of imploring love which fell from Christ’s eyes as He looked across the valley from Olivet, and saw the Temple glittering in the early sunshine. Think of “*O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not*.”²⁰ On the cross, he experienced the pain of disappointment, “*Come unto me, all*

²⁰ MacLaren’s Exposition. Commentary on 2 Cor. 5:20. See: https://bible-hub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/5-20.htm.

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ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). It is this rest, this peace, the fruit of reconciliation, that he continues to offer through our role as ambassadors.

We represent this weeping God, weeping in the person of Christ. We lament in intercession. The Holy Spirit now groans with us, in us, indeed, through us. We are broken over lostness and a world intent on rejecting God again in rejecting those who are sent by Him.

Yet, Christ is still beseeching humanity, prayerfully, as heaven's intercessor, and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. God, the Father, is beseeching humanity in Him and by his intercession, and we are called to join that prayer, and out of that spirit of prayer, do the work of an ambassador.

In this ministry as an ambassador, Christ continues to reach out, with "imploping and welcoming hands to men... praying them to grasp His hands and be saved."²¹ It is amazing, in the face of such tenderness and love, joined to unspeakable power and sovereignty, that humans say to God's pleas in Christ, through us, and by the Spirit, "I will not!" It is madness, the blindness of sin.

Our 'witness' as an ambassador is often a decisive moment for the unreconciled. To watch someone walk away, unyielding, wrenching themselves away from God by antagonism and rebellion is to see madness in motion and in dead color. In such moments, our hearts should be broken.

Isaiah speaks of "*brave warriors*" who "*weep in public*" and "*ambassadors of peace*" who "*cry in bitter disappointment*" (Isaiah 33:7 NLT). The task of the ambassador is not easy. There is a balance that is necessary that only the Spirit can achieve in our lives. We are, on the one hand, to be poised, and composed, dignified and controlled, calm and cool. On the other hand, we

²¹ Maclaren's Exposition. Commentary on 2 Cor. 5:20. See: https://bible-hub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/5-20.htm.

are mournful, broken, devastated too often by the reaction, the resistance to grace.

Ambassadors engage in an exercise of peace often performed in the midst of potential or evident conflict. It is, at times, a tear-jerking role, heart-wrenching and breaking. Yet, one in which our composure and calm is important as clues of the king we represent. Whatever the outcome, God has not been surprised. We will not find heaven in disarray due to the actions of a rogue agent here on the earth. God will not be wringing His hands. He knew. He anticipated the response. And He knows what His next action will be – relax.

Review:

1. The ambassador never speaks for himself! For whom does he speak? God? – perhaps! But then, what agency is used in the sending process?
2. Is the ambassador autonomous? Detached? A direct representative of the throne of God? Or a representative of the kingdom of God via the church? Does he go, or is he sent? Talk about this.
3. Ambassadors, according to scripture, plead on Christ's behalf, "in his stead" – that is pretty powerful. They represent Christ, with the goal of peacemaking, ultimately, reconciliation. Talk about this.
4. How does amnesty fit into the role of the ambassador?
5. How is intercession related to the role of the ambassador?
6. Is intercession about spiritual warfare or reconciliation? Where then, does the ambassador role connect?
7. Consider prayer as a plea – that is a legal term! And then, the pleading role of the ambassador. And how is that then, related to intercession, and reconciliation?

PART 4

Kings And Ambassadors

Overview:

Think of the role of the ambassador as one who helps the king – or the Mayor or Governor or School Board Chair - ‘discover what is in their heart’. It is not our work that is paramount, nor our words. We are ambassadors, giving visibility to God, voicing, first, a blessing, His goodness, His love and grace. We are waking up in people of power, a God consciousness. We obviously cannot do that. This is a function, an extension of God’s presence out of prayer. It is a priestly, prayerful task. That, above all else, informs our function as ambassadors.

The ambassador is an emissary – sent to kings, rulers, leaders. God cares about such individuals. Ambassadors, as a reflection of God’s character, must care. But God is also the God of nations. This macro view of the church’s work has not been on our radar screen.

Is all authority truly from God? Is it God who raises up and takes down? Do we believe that God works in the hearts of kings? That He directs the king’s heart, his thoughts, like a stream of water? All of these ideas are from Bible passages. What then, is the role of the ambassador? It is to wake up the work of God already going on in

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the life of the person of power or influence. It is to relate, on behalf of God, to thrones.

Wisdom is a metaphor, in Proverbs, for the Holy Spirit. Leaders need wisdom. And by inference, leaders need the Holy Spirit. There is an anointing on office, on authority, even on the chair in which the mayor sits. All authority is established by God – it is sacred. When the man in the office is corrupt, the chair remains sacred – without authority, there would be disorder and chaos. When we cannot bless the pathology of the man, we bless the potential of the chair, and of the man, when redeemed.

The ambassador helps the leader understand and discern true Wisdom, or to say it more directly – to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Kings 4:34, we learn that “*kings from every nation sent their ambassadors to listen to the wisdom of Solomon*” (NLT). Second Chronicles notes that “*ambassadors of Babylon’s rulers*” were sent to Hezekiah to investigate certain happenings in Judah, and the occasion prompted a test by God to help the King “*discover what was in his heart*” (2 Chronicles 32:31; CSB). This ambassador encounter, though the representatives were from Babylon, nevertheless, was an occasion for God to prompt the self-examination of the heart of the king. This is precisely what we hope for when we, as ambassadors of Christ, meet with a king, a royal, a mayor or magistrate, that the occasion will invite a God-conscious moment of self-examination by the work of the Spirit.

Spiritual Intelligence

Jeremiah proclaimed, “*I have heard a message from the Lord, and an ambassador has been sent to the nations*” (Jer. 49:14). Some translations say, “*I have heard a rumor*” (KJV). Jeremiah then goes on a prophetic tear, prophesying regarding Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom and ultimately Babylon. He is not the ambas-

sador, but his role as prophet follows the failed mission of the ambassador. Some believe this pointed to Obadiah, who carried a message from God to Edom. They, however, would not hear him. Notice then – God sends emissaries, ambassadors to nations, to national leaders. God is not merely the God of Israel. He is not a territorial god. He governs the affairs of all nations.

In the Old Testament, we see more frequently, the dealings of God through the prophets with Israel and Judah as well as other nations. They negotiate with kings on God's behalf, serve as advisors, carry messages, issue warnings and call for repentance. In the New Testament, it may seem as if the sacred economy has narrowed to individual souls, but that is not the case. That is due to our flawed interpretation, to the cultural influence of hyper-individualism. Nations matter to God, and they should matter to us as well.

As we have noted, the book of Acts references some one hundred place names. It is the record of the gospel in its journey from Jerusalem to Rome – and encounters with religious and city leaders, and with kings along the way. The epistles are letters to the churches in those cities, as are the letters of Christ Jesus (Rev. 2-3) to the churches of Asia Minor. And they suggest that the state of the Church and the nature of the cities are in some ways related. The Church is intended to be a change agent in the city.

The God of the Church is on mission, inviting us to join Him, to impact cities and nations. We have developed a view of God that seems cool and distant, almost with a measure of deism. God is there – but hiding, silent, passive, leaving the affairs of daily life to us, only providing us moral perimeters with punitive consequences when we stray. Salvation is more than a ticket to the afterlife – and Sunday church has to be more than an encouragement to be good little boys and girls along the way.

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Such a view is unfortunate. The God who was active in the affairs of nations in Scripture, and in the life of villages and cities, is still at work. It is we who are asleep at the wheel, undiscerning, blind to the evidence of His fingerprints in history. The eschatological charts in the back of our Bibles must not lure us into a passive reaction to last-day events, as if all is cast in concrete and there is little we can do. The scriptures reveal things in the future not to induce slumber but as a call to vigilance. The 'if-then' dynamic of biblical promises is never more pregnant with potential than in Kairos times.

Jeremiah, the prophet, after the rejection by Edom of Obadiah's plea, saw the nations gathering to fight against Edom (Jeremiah 49:14, NKJV). The revelation and action of one prophet gave birth to those of another prophet. These are big chess pieces, but they do not move, without the interface of ambassadors of God, priests and prophets, speaking to political powers. In an age where we have shuffled faith to the sidelines, insisting that it be quiet, and privatized, this may seem shocking. But this is normal. Jeremiah was operating with heavenly intelligence information. Evidently, he had no contact directly with Obadiah. He had heard a *rumor*. Some say a *report* (Amplified), others an *envoy* (Christian Standard). Someone might have shared information with him. Ultimately, he heard from God.

Ambassadors trade in confidential information, in classified intelligence. And they are, at times, released to share such information. And to be clear, not all who would be ambassadors are to be trusted. The inhabitants of Gibeon heard about the utter triumph of Israel and how the walls of Jericho had collapsed and they "*worked craftily and went and pretended to be ambassadors*" (Joshua 9:3-4; NKJV). They forged an agreement with Israel on false premises that would haunt the nation for centuries. Discernment is critical. Both in receiving and sending the ambassador.

Proverbs warns, "*A wicked messenger falls into hardship, But a faithful ambassador brings healing*" (Proverbs 13:17; AMP). The imme-

diate goal is always healing and peace, and again – reconciliation. The desired end is the great healing of redemption and the worship of God.

Daniel was a Jewish exile who interfaced with the kings of the dominant empires of his day. He did so, not as an outsider, but as an insider, an advisor. He acted as an ambassador of God, if you will, always speaking God’s word and offering divine wisdom to ungodly kings. His advice differed from the majority of his peers, the astrologers and soothsayers. He was willing to be the minority voice, to break with the norm, and stand alone. This will often be the case.

Elijah stood alone in the midst of 750 false prophets. Micaiah offered an upsetting prophecy to Ahab and Jehosaphat predicting a deadly military campaign. His prophecy was in contradiction to a whole company of false prophets led by (1 Kings 22:9-23) Zedekiah. Standing alone before both Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, he was lone voice in contrast to a whole company of prophets. First Kings describes the scene. A messenger informed Micaiah,

“Behold now, with one accord the words of the prophets are favorable to the king. So please let your words be like theirs, and speak favorably” (1 Kings 22:13).

The handler knew Micaiah’s reputation. “Don’t rock the boat. For once in your life, fall in line and agree with all these other prophets – they can’t all be wrong!” His response was cool, *“As surely as the LORD lives, I will speak whatever the LORD tells me”* (1 Kings 22:14). The national prayer service had been carefully orchestrated. National religious leaders had been gathered to give advice about the anticipated military conflict. Micaiah, known to be a rogue prophet, was last on the program. He was not the featured speaker. The program was designed to pressure his complicity. Zedekiah delivered the definitive word, with an incredible display of pageantry, complete with iron horns, a

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headdress, and probably a ritual dance, a form of prayer, simulating victory in battle. After this high point of pageantry, Micaiah was brought onto the stage from the green room.

Standing before the two kings, Ahab asked for his advice, “*Should we go to war?*” (v. 15). The flags were waving, the band was playing, the national spirit was high. And amazingly, Micaiah parroted the recommendation of the other prophets – but Ahab, as wicked as he was, knew he was not being forthright. Twisted though he was, he still wanted to hear the truth, even if in hearing it, he rejected it. The heart longs for truth. Like the body craves water, the conscience and soul starve for truth.

This is a morally and spiritually informative moment. We may want to speak comfortable things, to blend with the culture, to not be the minority voice. But even in the soul of the most wicked leader, there is a recognition of the ring of truth. Ahab pressed the prophet, “*How many times must I make you swear not to tell me anything but the truth in the name of the LORD?*” (v. 16). So, Micaiah gave Ahab the bloody truth.

“I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘These people have no master; let each one return home in peace’” (v. 17).

Ahab must have muttered to himself and to Jehosaphat that he now knew it was a mistake to allow Micaiah to speak. What followed next is a rare glance into the workings of heaven’s courtroom. Ahab was holding court on the earth, but there was also a court proceeding happening in heaven. The decrees of heaven’s court would eclipse the false prediction of Zedekiah and confirm the word of Micaiah.

Micaiah reported seeing “*the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left*” (v. 19). In that setting, heaven was considering the battle into

which Israel and Judah and their two kings would enter. He argued that there was “*a lying spirit in the mouths*” of all the false prophets (v. 23), and despite what they said, speaking directly to Ahab, “*the LORD has pronounced disaster against you.*”

What a word to speak to the king in a national prayer gathering when another king was present, and war was imminent. What audacity. And for Micaiah, what an unpleasant assignment. In the next chapter, we will talk in depth about the ambassador continuum – from the priestly ambassador to the prophetic ambassador. In this text, we are now waist deep into the function of the ambassador-*prophet*.

Not only was Micaiah in an uncomfortable conflict, but he was also the one lone voice, speaking in contrast to the multiple voices – those of false prophets. The combined spiritual leadership of the nation, 400 prophets, had spoken definitively and in unity, and Micaiah was tasked by God with being the one dissenting voice. If we were the only ambassador voice that leaders were hearing, it might make our role easier. But that is not the case. There are competing and contradictory voices.

Then there was the discomfort of having to deliver a negative message. In this case, it was a death notice to Ahab, announced publicly along with the pronouncement of the national defeat of both Israel and Judah in the battle. This is not a moment in which the prophet can wrap himself in the national flag. This is uncomfortable. Though Micaiah appears alone, and so will we at times, he was not alone, nor will we be.

Zedekiah was the leader and spokesperson for the whole cast of prophets, hundreds of them, excluding Micaiah. Zedekiah had danced before the king in symbolic action to demonstrate the triumph of Ahab and Israel in the battle. Ahab had watched it all. He was certainly not pleased with the prophetic word of Micaiah, but it was Zedekiah who reacted on behalf of Ahab.

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He “*went up, struck Micaiah in the face, and demanded, ‘Which way did the Spirit of the LORD go when He departed from me to speak with you?’*” (v. 24). He was boldly asserting that he had heard from the Lord and Micaiah was the liar. Micaiah’s words were not worthy of consideration. He doubted their divine inspiration.

It must have been quite a scene – and it was on national television. Two spiritual leaders, in open conflict, one physically assaulting the other in a national prayer service in front of two kings, their company and guests. Micaiah did not retaliate. He simply replied, “*You will soon see, on that day when you go and hide in an inner room*” (v. 25). It was a taunt. The outcome of the battle, the death of Ahab, the shame of being wrong before the nation, would send Zedekiah into hiding. The scene closes with Ahab ordering,

“Put this man [Micaiah] in prison and feed him only bread and water until I return safely” (v. 27).

“*Until I return safely!*” Ahab doubted the words of Micaiah. The prophet replied, “*‘If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me.’ Then he added [speaking to the whole assembly], ‘Take heed, all you people!’*” (v. 28). He was right. Israel lost the battle. Ahab was mortally wounded.

Daniel (2:21) declared, “*He [God] controls the course of world events; he removes kings and sets up other kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the scholars.*” Indeed, He does. Don’t fear kings when you represent the King of kings, the Sovereign God. This is why Paul could be so confident before kings, even in chains.

Spiritual Authority

Paul, the apostle, had his moment before various kings. He would write, “*For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God*” (Romans 13:1). Wis-

dom literature declares, *“The king’s heart is like a stream of water directed by the Lord; he guides it wherever he pleases”* (Proverbs 21:1). Of course, a king can harden his heart and refuse to listen, but when he does, the consequences are often severe. Psalm 75:7 emphasizes God’s ultimate sovereignty, *“It is God alone who judges; he decides who will rise and who will fall.”* Behind thrones and kingly dynamics, God is at work. It is this God that the ambassador serves. And it is the role of this ambassador to wake up in a sovereignty, the reality of the God who has placed him or her in the seat of power.

“Some nations boast of their chariots and horses, but we boast in the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7). A secular mentality excludes God from the equation of international relationships and the balance of powers. Such a deduction is not wise. Boasting in the name of the Lord is more than religious bravado. It invokes God’s name, calling Him, inviting His intervention. It is also a matter of character alignment. The name of the Lord is ‘holy,’ and from that state of being comes truth, justice, righteousness. Power that is not partnered with virtue and honor will never stand. At times, despots seem to reign, advancing tyranny, reducing neighboring nations to nothing. When Judah faced powerful invading forces, Jehosaphat, the king, prayed. *“O our God, won’t you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help”* (2 Chronicles 20:12). And God did intervene.

Spiritual Kings and Generals Who Pray

On December 8, 1944, near the end of World War II, United States Army, General Patton summoned Chaplain James O’Neill, and asked him to compose a prayer to stop the rains that had stymied the Allied effort. The Chaplain was shocked – he was expected to change the weather? Patton, a man of faith, confided in the chaplain. Three things, he believed, determined outcomes – plans, working the plan, and prayer. And prayer,

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Patton believed, tipped the scales. “Those who pray,” Patton declared, “do more for the world than those who fight; and if the world goes from bad to worse, it is because there are more battles than prayers.”²² It was, in Patton’s opinion, the “*hands ‘lifted up’ in prayer,*” that “smash more battalions than hands that strike.”²³ So the chaplain composed a prayer that was distributed to a quarter of a million troops – and Patton called on his men, not only to think and plan and fight, but to pray.

The simple prayer was distributed on a card with a Christmas greeting on the reverse side. It carried Patton’s signature. He placed the weight of his own authority behind it.

*Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee...
restrain these immoderate rains... Grant us fair weather for
Battle ... [that] we may advance from victory to victory and
crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish
Thy justice among men and nations.*²⁴

The chaplain left Patton’s office with his signature on the prayer card and by December 14, the cards had been printed, and the praying began. Nothing seemed to change. On December 16, the Nazi’s advanced despite the bad weather, but they were overly aggressive. Out of hiding, and confident, they were exposed when the weather suddenly changed on December 20. That allowed Patton and his forces to secure a decisive victory, one that turned the tide of the war.

“*How the king rejoices in your strength, O Lord! He shouts with joy because you give him victory*” (Psalm 21:1). Proverbs 21:31 declares, “*The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.*” So, it was – the Panzer units seem to have had the upper hand with a quick and incisive blow despite the rain, the fog and

²² James Hugh O’Neill, “The True Story of “The Patton Prayer.” March 24th, 2022. See:<https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2022/03/true-story-patton-prayer-james-hugh-o-neill.html>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

the limited visibility. But prayer – and God, tipped the scales. Psalm 33:16-17 cautions kings, *“The best-equipped army cannot save a king, nor is great strength enough to save a warrior. Don’t count on your warhorse to give you victory—for all its strength, it cannot save you.”*

Spirit Power and Righteousness as Partners

Proverbs 29:4 noted, *“A just king gives stability to his nation, but one who demands bribes destroys it.”* It is justice that provides order and due process. Justice that is administered by a righteous standard. Partiality, that erases evenhandedness, which suppresses honesty and integrity because of bribes, invites God’s direct intervention. With such corrupt powers, peace and order are unlikely. Jeremiah, the prophet, exclaims, *“This is what the Lord says: ‘Be fair-minded and just. Do what is right! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors’”* (Jeremiah 22:3). Kings are to *“defend the poor, to rescue the children of the needy, and to crush their oppressors”* (Psalm 72:4). *“A king,”* a good king, *“detests wrongdoing, for his rule is built on justice”* (Proverbs 16:12).

The ultimate king is Jesus, *“His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity”* (Isaiah 9:7). We are ambassadors of that rejected, but risen king, reminding those in power that Jesus rose from the dead – the values for which he lived cannot be put away. The voice with which he spoke truth to power will not be silenced. The compassion he demonstrated for the poor and oppressed is still demanded of kings today. He is still alive, reigning in exile, and coming again, this time, to claim the thrones and dominions of the world. *“Which side, Sir, Madam – Mayor, Governor, President, Senator, Magistrate, Judge – are you on?”*

During the not-so-Civil War, one of Lincoln’s aides, meant to be encouraging to the President, noted that he should find solace in the fact that God was on the side of the Union. Those who heard the remark were caught off guard by Lincoln’s

quick-witted response. “Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God’s side, for God is always right.”

Outside the walls of Jericho, Joshua *“looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua approached Him and asked, ‘Are You for us or for our enemies?’”* It is the same question, *“Are you on our side?”* (Joshua 5:13). The answer shocked Joshua. *“Neither,”* He replied. *“I have now come as Commander of the LORD’s army”* (Joshua 5:14). There was a third army on the scene – the army of God’s angels. The scriptures say, *“Joshua fell face down in reverence and asked Him, ‘What does my Lord have to say to His servant?’”* This is critical – to hear from God on the cusp of any conflict. *“The Commander of the LORD’s army replied, ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.’ And Joshua did so”* (Joshua 5:15). Worship, we learn here, prayerful humility, is more important than warfare. It is the key to winning any battle. God is not choosing sides – we are. And as Lincoln noted, we need to make sure we stay on God’s side – in humility and worship.

The Ambassador and Humility

Jesus is the “good king” whose “rule is built on justice” (Proverbs 16:12). He is the ultimate King who reigns with perfect justice. This verse foreshadows the eternal, righteous rule of Christ, a model for all earthly kings. We are reminded, *“Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall”* (Proverbs 16:18). Power intoxicates. It blinds. Humility clears the vision. So, all men, including kings are to *“humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor”* (1 Peter 5:6). Jesus warned, *“But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted”* (Matthew 23:12). James, the brother of Jesus, bluntly warns, *“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”* (4:6),

It turns out that we see better on our knees. And in that position, we stand taller. *"Because of me [God], kings reign, and rulers make just decrees. Rulers lead with my help, and nobles make righteous judgments"* (Proverbs 8:15-16). It is awareness of this fact, of God's hand and presence, that the ambassador is called to awaken in the hearts of those in power. Wisdom is what all leaders and rulers need. And Wisdom in Scripture is often a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. What a grand idea.

Kings, leaders, guide – with wisdom, that is, not by being smarter, but by reliance on God, the Holy Spirit, who has thrust them into office. This wisdom is a gift from God, it comes down from the 'Father of lights,' and aids in making sound decisions. Success depends on such decisions. *"Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! And whatever else you do, develop good judgment"* (Proverbs 4:7). That demands dependence on God, the Holy Spirit.

Every decision is an intersection, a fork in the road, *"A wise person chooses the right road; a fool takes the wrong one"* (Eccl. 10:2). That choice is aided by 'Wisdom,' by the Holy Spirit – and the godly ambassador represents the resonating human voice, agreeing with Wisdom, speaking to kings, as Jesus said, being provided the words to say in the moment.

As a young pastor, God brought a judge into my life as a friend. One day, in the parsonage in which I lived, he shared his incredible story. Born Catholic, he was raised in parish schools until his behavior got him expelled. He was cool to faith until he married, and he and his wife felt they needed moral education 'for their children.' So, they returned to their Catholic roots. As he warmed to faith, and his career catapulted him from attorney into the seat of a judge, he found the daily noon-time retreat to a nearby Catholic church refreshing.

On one occasion, the designated lector was not present, and the staff thought it a good idea to have the judge read the

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passage for the day. It was a jolting experience for him. I recall his painful admission. "I read it perfectly. I understood every word, and not a thing at all that I had been given to read." He began to read the Bible as an intellectual challenge. It intimidated him. Its meaning was obscure to him.

In the process, a friend invited him, rather forcefully, to attend a cursillo retreat. He went reluctantly, feeling trapped, and then, in the midst of one of the sessions, as a presenter shared his encounter with the Holy Spirit, the judge felt, for the first time, the presence of God. With tears, he recalled the moment. "I was overwhelmed with a deep sense of how much God loved me!" He remembered how he fought back the tears. "I can't cry," he told himself. "I am a judge."

Returning home, someone gave him a book with testimonies of an outpouring of the Spirit of God at Notre Dame. Alone, his wife away over a weekend, he made himself comfortable in a bay window and started the journey through the book. In it, he read the testimony of a priest who students prayed for to be filled with the Spirit. "How could that be?" he asked himself. "Why is the priest not praying for the students?" – it was backward. A priest that needed God, just as he needed God. A priest, who needed to be filled with the Spirit, just as he needed to be filled with the Spirit.

He recalled the moment as if it had just happened. Suddenly, he was out of the bay window on the floor. The book had been tossed across the room. On his knees, his hands raised, instinctively, his face upward toward God, the tears streaming down his face, he felt the same overwhelming love of God he had felt at the retreat. That moment transformed him. It changed him forever. He was free, and yet also shocked by God's constraining love. He was filled with joy and peace.

On Monday, a prostitute appeared in his courtroom. She had been there multiple times before, always with an ugly attitude

ending in disruptive behavior. Normally, she was sullen, disrespectful, then violent, and finally forcibly removed by multiple officers. On this morning, as she stood before the bench, suddenly, the judge was overcome again with the love of God. This time, the love of God was not merely *to* him or *for* him. It was *through* him. “I had to restrain myself from weeping,” he recalled. “I could say nothing at all without the fear of completely breaking down in front of the entire court.” For a moment, time seemed frozen.

As the judge regained his composure, with compassion in his voice, he explained, as he had in the past, that the law demanded a penalty. “I could feel God loving her through me,” he remembered.

“I know,” your Honor, she replied. “Thank you so much for your kindness!”

He remembered the morning. A stunned shock could be felt. Police officers who had entered the courtroom stood nearby to subdue the defendant as they had done before. Curious glances were exchanged, all silently asking, “What is going on in this courtroom?” The judge knew. God was present. He was at work, subduing the heart of a sinner by his dominating love.

The Holy Spirit, working with us, is a better witness than we can be.

Review:

1. Consider the role of the ambassador who helps the king ‘discover what is in his heart’. How does that inform our function as ambassadors?
2. The ambassador is an emissary – sent to kings, rulers, leaders. God cares about individuals, but He is also the God of nations. Why has this not been on our radar screen?

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3. Is all authority from God, who raises up and takes down? And do we believe that God works in the hearts of kings? Directing it, like a stream of water? What then, is the role of the ambassador? How do we relate to thrones?
4. Rehearse the story of General Patton.
5. Consider these passages as well - 2 Samuel 7:23; Psalm 67:1–2; and particularly 2 Kings 19:35–37.
6. Wisdom is a metaphor in Proverbs for the Holy Spirit. If all leaders need wisdom, do all leaders then need the Holy Spirit?
7. How does the ambassador help the leader understand and discern Wisdom, or to say it more directly – the voice of the Holy Spirit?

PART 5

God Cares About Kings And Kingdoms

Overview:

God cares about kings – about thrones, about the nature of authority and its character. At times, it appears that we see only the individual, not the king, not the throne, and not the office. In a democracy, we tend to be dismissive of power, challenging it, being cynical and disrespectful. We seem blind to the spiritual nature and source of authority, especially secular authority.

Amos claimed that God spoke to his servants the prophets, to seers, revealing His counsel to them. This is spiritual intelligence. Does God still do such things today? Has He changed? Perhaps, we are missing something. Perhaps God is anxious to reveal things to us, to guide us in our interface with kings, but that idea seems to be too daunting for us. But Amos is right. God speaks to kings through prophets.

There appears to be a continuum from the role of the Ambassador-Priest to Ambassador-Prophet. And there also appears to be the potential for different levels of the Ambassador's function. The priestly mode is foundational. It is on the continuum of love. That bridge of love, of respect, of grace, of support, is so important. We

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have ignored it. We have failed to build bridges of love to leaders. The church has no ambassador ministry.

From the continuum of love, we move to the continuum of truth – yet these two are not separate. They are bound together. There is no true truth without love – since the greatest truth is the love of God. And love without truth is only a wrapping for a lie. Love and truth are bound together. Yet, love leads. Love helps the medicine of truth go down.

The prophet-ambassador majors in truth. The prophets of the Old Testament took their role seriously – they kept journals of their encounters with kings (2 Chronicles 12:15).

In this chapter, we will examine the five postures of the ambassador – the ambassador-evangelist, and so forth. This is different from the levels we will mention, though you will see some overlap. Ask the question. Where do you fit? Would this be helpful in building an ambassador team?

God cares about kings. The Bible has two books named ‘kings,’ and two more that are the ‘chronicles’ of kings. The term king, kings, or kingdom occurs more than 2500 times in the NIV. With a secularistic cultural view, we ignore kings and kingdoms. We privatize faith, pushing it to the hidden margins of life. This can no longer be the case. Nor can it be the case that kings and those who govern, ignore God. When Solomon ascended the throne he prayed, “*Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who, by himself, is able to govern these great people of yours?*” (1 Kings 3:9).

When kings and kingdoms veer out of order, God raises up prophets who speak truth to power as Nathan did to David. “*You are that man!*” – the man of sin, the oppressor, the one deserving judgment, the prophet told the king. “*The LORD, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the*

power of Saul” (2 Samuel 12:7). But David had forgotten. And the prophet, Nathan, sought to hold him accountable for his sins – sins that would not only cost David, but the nation, as well.

Moses had urged, in Deuteronomy 17:18-19, that every king when he ascended the throne, “*must copy for himself this body of instruction [the Scripture, the Law of God] on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. He must always keep that copy with him and read it daily as long as he lives.*” That would have been quite a task. A legal prerequisite for reigning then was creating a personal copy of the law and faithfully reading it daily. Wow! The role of the king was ultimately to, “*Serve the Lord with reverent fear and rejoice with trembling*” (Psalm 2:10-11).

The throne, the chair, upon which every ruler sits belongs to God. Words and actions done from that place of power are weighed by heaven. The chair itself has a nature – the nature of God. When the person in the chair and the principles for which the chair was established are not congruent – God raises up ambassador-prophets who call for integrity, for the pure, godly and noble use of power.

The Ambassador-Prophet

Amos 3:7 notes, “*Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.*” The Christian Standard Bible says, he reveals “*His counsel*” to the prophets.” The CJB translates the term as ‘His plan.’ The CEV says, “*Whatever the LORD God plans to do, he tells his servants, the prophets.*” Before the “*trouble, he first tells his prophets about it*” (Easy).

The original name for the prophet was seer (1 Samuel 9:9). The strength of the prophet’s gift was in discernment. It was a gift of spiritual perception. David, and other kings, had spiritual men around them that they trusted (2 Samuel 24:11). These men were to strengthen the king, to affirm noble spiritual values, and reinforce his will and determination to rule in a

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godly manner. This position over time degenerated to a group of ‘insider’ prophets who were only echoes of the king’s desires. The ‘outsider’ prophet, then ‘straightened’ more than he strengthened. It was his lot to bring the truth – when the kept prophets, on the king’s payroll, were afraid to speak such truth. They had lost their objective independence, their capacity to speak freely for God alone had been compromised.

The issue is one of balance. Because power tends to corrupt, the prophet’s disposition was compromised, and outsider prophets shifted to the adversarial. But prophecy, in its purest form, is *strengthening*, not *straightening*. It first majors in love, and then in truth. Both are needed. Today, as outsiders, we tend to see the prophetic role as correcting, as confrontational, as truth telling. But prophecy is also “*comfort, edification [words that build up and strengthen] and exhortation [encouragement]*” (1 Cor. 14:2). This is the stream of love (1 Cor. 13).

Instead of *strengthening*, however, because of sin’s power, the prophet has ended up on one side of the continuum - *straightening*. But again, that is not his purest and more innocent role. And it is the strengthening role we want to see partnered with the activity of the ambassador. And obviously, not to the exclusion of the speaking truth to power. But first, let’s build a bridge.

This is not a call to affirm evil or blindly rubber-stamp sin. The ambassador must retain not only their objectivity, but their independence. Always remember that we as ambassadors represent another kingdom. Our goal is friendship. Our language is affirmative. Our cooperation is a noble goal. Open and respectful communication is our purpose. To serve the One who has sent us is paramount, and to do so, serving the one to whom we are sent is also desirable.

The ideal in Israel was for multiple prophetic voices to speak in unison. 2 Kings 17:13 notes,

“Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets’”

According to 2 Chronicles 9:29, these prophets took their task seriously.

The text in Chronicles speaks of the “book of Nathan the prophet” and the “prophecy of Ahijah,” along with the visions of “Iddo the seer” in the days of Jeroboam, the first king of the breakaway northern kingdom. These records are lost to us. But they are apparently journals of prophetic insights and messages to kings and about national and international affairs. Second Chronicles 12:15 offers a similar note about the “*acts of Rehoboam*,” Solomon’s son, and the first king of the southern nation of Judah. All his acts, the “*first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer...?*”

These prophet-seers kept written records of national acts and events, and journals. They closely followed the affairs of the nation and its king – and they did so from their spiritual office. Who does that today in America? In your city? Who connects the dots between political and civic events and decisions and the kingdom of God?

From Ambassador to Prophet

We should pause and note that earlier, I suggested that the role of the ambassador was tied more closely to that of the priest than the prophet. And being tied to the role of priest, it is intercessory. Frankly, what we often call intercession is trading prayer requests with other Christians. That is intercession, and yet it is far too narrow. We should trade prayer requests and pray for one another. But the role of intercession was meant for much heavier lifting.

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Even the prophetic, in some circles, is too often the use of *charismata* in an orbit that is far too small. We fail to use intercession and prophetic insight at the big chess board with kings and queens, bishops and knights and pawns. Our intercession needs to be turned outward. Paul urged us, “*Pray for kings and those in authority*” (1 Timothy 2:1). We are called to bless – to pray with lifted hands, beginning in the posture of priests and with the goal of blessing.

Let’s look at the different levels of the ambassador’s ministry.

LEVEL ONE: The ambassador in the role and office of priest, ready to bless, is based largely on the 2 Corinthians text, and out of the spirit of New Testament grace. It is connected to the idea that there is an offer of amnesty on the table, rising out of God’s mercy and grace. And further, we must acknowledge that we do not articulate that offer effectively, either to kings or nations, at least we haven’t in our modern times.

I am appealing for love and mercy and grace to be our first disposition (Level One). We are too quick to criticize, to loft accusations, to stand apart from and make any support conditional. We have traditionally drawn lines, not enclosures. Ambassadors must first build the bridges that are desperately needed between the church, as the agent of God’s kingdom and the kings of this world.

Ultimately, that bridge of love may become the bridge of truth – painful truth, confrontation. But that is not the place to *begin*. Ambassadors posture first as priestly, relating out of love, blessing and not cursing.

At **LEVEL TWO**, ambassadors are also called upon to articulate the principles of the kingdom – to *educate*, to share how and why God blesses.

At **LEVEL THREE**, ambassadors *speak truth to power*, pointing out incongruences between the spiritual con-

dition that God blesses and those from which He withholds blessing. This is done dispassionately. Almost in a matter-of-fact manner.

At **LEVEL FOUR**, ambassadors may be called upon to deliver *a prophetic warning*. That is now beyond the articulation of truth. Sadly, we go here first, too quickly, without evidence of love or offering support. We noted earlier the respect that Paul demonstrated before Fetus and Agrippa. Level Four is the delivery of a warning, but don't forget, a warning is a signal of grace.

At **LEVEL FIVE**, the ambassador moves *past a warning* to *judgement* itself – or to *a word of relief* because the warning has been heeded.

At any time, we may move backward, as an act of grace, from, for example, from Level Two back to Level One. The principles may be flowing too fast – and we may discover that the strength of the bridge is not adequate – it needs to be widened, reinforced. We may move to Level Three and understand that we need to return to Level Two and *educate with grace*. Think of this continuum as very dynamic. And remember, if you lose the bridge – you can no longer deliver truth – with love. The grace connection is gone. That puts us in the position of hurling prophetic words and warnings and judgements. Our position becomes unbalanced, adversarial. It is truth without love.

Never compromise truth, but truth needs the bridge of love.

Of course, we can never rule out the possibility of a stinging, stern prophetic word to kings. Or a word of judgement from God. Nor can we rule out a negative and unaccepting reaction by those in power. When Hanani, the seer, appeared before Asa, the king of Judah, he challenged him. “*You relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand.*” Asa did not appreciate the prophet's criticism. 2 Chronicles 16:10 notes, “*Asa was*

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angry with the seer, and put him in prison,” and that with a note, “for he was enraged at him because of this.”

This role of seer-prophet-ambassador is not a comfortable one. It is not for sissies.

The Prophet-Ambassador

Isaiah offered a ‘woe’ from the Lord to *“the rebellious children”* of Israel. Delivering that ‘woe’ may be the unpleasant task of the ambassador-prophet. Israel was attempting to *“carry out a plan”* that was not from the Lord *“by forming alliances with ungodly nations.”*

You cannot miss this. The ambassador-prophet was representing the concerns of God and His kingdom to the nation, about its international relationships with ungodly nations. He, Yahweh, was the true king of Israel, and His kingdom. The proposed alliance, the prophet observed, had the side effect of *“heaping up sin upon sin”* (Isaiah 30:1). Advisors had gone *“down to Egypt without asking My [God’s] advice, to seek shelter under Pharaoh’s protection”* (30:2). The treaty, the prophet predicted, will *“bring neither help nor benefit, but only shame and disgrace”* (30:5).

The prophet was to write his message *“on a tablet in their presence and inscribe it on a scroll; it will be for the days to come, a witness forever and ever”* (Isaiah 30:8). This was to be legal evidence, a matter of record. The rebellion of the people, their unwillingness to obey, indeed, their predisposition away from God made them vulnerable to deceit – and God wanted a record of His attempt to block them from the pain they would bring on themselves. *“They say to the seers, ‘Stop seeing visions!’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us the truth! Speak to us pleasant words; prophesy illusions. Get out of the way; turn off the road. Rid us of the Holy One of Israel!’”* (Isaiah 30:10-11). This so fittingly describes the neutrality, then the pluralism, then the agnosticism of our nation. These people not only wanted the prophets silenced, but they also

wanted God expelled from national life.

But God is not so easily dismissed.

"Therefore, this is what the Holy One [the God] of Israel says: Because you have rejected this message, trusting in oppression and relying on deceit, this iniquity of yours is like a breach about to fall, a bulge in a high wall, whose collapse will come suddenly - in an instant!" (Isaiah 30:13-14).

The nation will be broken *"like a potter's jar, shattered so that no fragment can be found."* The failure to hear the prophet of God, to receive the ambassador of His kingdom, has consequences. Yet, the God of grace, often turns back, *"By repentance and rest you would be saved; your strength would lie in quiet confidence,"* that was the offer. *"But you were not willing"* (Isaiah 30:15). Remember, *"The LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore, He rises to show you compassion, for the LORD is a just God. Blessed are all who wait for Him"* (30:18).

Despite the recalcitrant hearts, God continues to speak. *"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: 'This is the way. Walk in it'"* (30:21). Hearing God, the prophet imagines a people now eager to obey, throwing away their silver and gold-plated idols, *"Be gone!"* they say (30:22). At such a response, God

"...will send rain for the seed that you have sown in the ground, and the food that comes from your land will be rich and plentiful... your cattle will graze in open pastures. The oxen and donkeys that work the ground will eat ... from every high mountain and every raised hill, streams of water will flow... on the day that the LORD binds up the brokenness of His people and heals the wounds He has inflicted" (30:23-26).

There are seasons, it seems, that the Lord pours out a deep sleep on prophets and covers the heads of seers and leaves a nation without the benefit of supernatural insight (Isaiah

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29:10). Then an awakening comes – and prophets again speak, and seers see, and ambassadors build priestly bridges. We are in such a season.

Ambassadors: The Priest-Prophet Continuum

Let's review, attempting to create a scale to see the intensification of the ambassador-priest-prophet.

- **LEVEL ONE: AMBASSADOR-PRIEST.** The tone is conciliatory. The theme is *love*. The desire is to open the channel of communication between the earthly power and the kingdom of God, represented by its nearby embassy, the church. The action is that of the priestly *blessing*. We do not rush to call fire down on our city, but to speak peace – *shalom*. To offer good news, to bind up broken hearts and declare God's goodness.
- **LEVEL TWO: AMBASSADOR-TEACHER.** Here, the tone is still conciliatory. What is in view is *education* of what God desires, what brings His *blessing* on a city, and what are the inviolable *boundaries*. This is neutral information – in the sense that it is laid out in a dispassionate manner for those in power to consider. Let the Holy Spirit do his work – don't try to convince or persuade or even force a decision on the person in power. Whatever their decision, you are still in the role of ambassador-supporter.
- **LEVEL THREE: AMBASSADOR-PROPHET.** The tone must still be kept, conciliatory, not hostile. This stage is reached when practices contrary to Biblical principles have created a *problem*. City or corporate leaders, neighborhood agencies and school boards, may not connect the dots. The ambassador sets forth the thesis that X is causing Y and Z, and he relates this back to some scriptural principle (Level Two), trying to retrain in the

priestly spirit of the blessing in Level One. This sharing of truth is out of love, out of concern. It cannot be a ‘gotcha.’ The ambassador is in the same boat with the mayor or the person to whom they speak. They too, along with the whole community, are at risk.

- **LEVEL FOUR: PROPHET-AMBASSADOR.** At this point, if previous cautions were observed or those who heard the warnings, reversed their course, the ambassador may be in a ‘way-to-go’ position, offering encouragement for the righteous and bold action of the person in power to whom they spoke, the mayor, a representative, a board, etc. And such affirmation is important. It is also important to bring data, *“This is what appears to be happening since your last ruling... an improvement in ... a drop in ...”* – good news. On the other hand, this may be the moment in which the ambassador-prophet re-advocates the warning from God or returns with bad news. “Because we did not take positive action, the consequences appear to be that ...” Whatever you do, report the data fairly, and accurately, and keep yourself from personalizing and faulting the powers. Nathan nailed David, *“You are the man,”* but such blunt in-your-face confrontations need to be clearly inspired by God. They are useful for their jolting shock value. We also need to help community leaders pick up the pieces of bad decisions and failed policies. Claiming that ‘we were right’ is not helpful to a wounded city, school, neighborhood or company. Our role is discerning, in offering words of wisdom and knowledge, and in shepherding. We always return to the priestly home-plate.
- **LEVEL FIVE: PROPHET.** There will be times, as in Isaiah, when certain men and women in authority, boards and their chairpersons, will say, *“Stop seeing visions!... Do*

not prophesy to us the truth! Speak to us pleasant words; prophesy illusions.” Or “*Get out of the way...*”—we want no more of God (Isaiah 30:10-11). When we encounter such hard hearts, we are not relieved of our obligation. When lines are crossed and judgement seems imminent, it is the watchman, the ambassador as prophet who must warn of impending judgement. Such warnings are usually laced with a redemptive offer. Again, here is grace. And our attempt to return to a priestly posture. Of course, with hard hearts and heads, too often, there is no resolution, no desire for reconciliation with God. Judgement is the only language the incalcitrant hear.

The Ambassador and the Word of God

“Son of man,” God said to Ezekiel, *“Eat this scroll, then go and speak to the house of Israel.”* The scroll is symbolic of scripture. The ambassador does not traffic in opinions, but in God’s word. *“I opened my mouth, and He fed me the scroll”* (Ezekiel 3:1-2). Ezekiel was *“full of the words of the scroll.”* And then he was commanded, *“Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak My words to them”* (Ezekiel 3:4).

The ambassador is not a spokesman for himself, but for the Lord. And the task is not easy. For Ezekiel, it was not that he had to learn a foreign language. Rather, *“the house of Israel will be unwilling to listen to you, since they are unwilling to listen to Me. For the whole house of Israel is hard-headed and hard-hearted”* (Ezekiel 3:6-7). Still, the ambassador must go. *“Do not be afraid of them or dismayed at their presence...”* (Ezekiel 3:9). Just obey, God encouraged Ezekiel, *“Listen carefully to all the words I speak to you and take them to heart. Go to your people... tell them, ‘This is what the Lord GOD says,’ whether they listen or refuse to listen”* (Ezekiel 3:10-11).

Ezekiel experienced in that moment a confirmation of God’s presence with him, *“Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard a great*

rumbling sound behind me,” the sound of angels – he was not going alone, nor will you. *“Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His dwelling place!”* – he heard the angels say. Indeed. It is from this place that you are being sent as ambassadors. And it is to convey this blessing – from the Lord; and to reflect this glory. Suddenly, Ezekiel heard *“the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against one another and the sound of the wheels beside them, a great rumbling sound”* (Ezekiel 3:12-13). It was the army of the Lord. God is calling nations, states, cities, corporations, families into His presence and His purposes. This is no small assignment, this call to be an ambassador-prophet. *“So, the Spirit lifted me up and took me away... with the strong hand of the LORD upon me”* (Ezekiel 3:14-15).

For seven days, Ezekiel was in the presence of the Lord. That’s a good model. You may not have seven days to set aside for consecration, but you dare to take on the task of ambassador-prophet in a casual, business-as-usual manner. The role of watchman is related to that of the intercessor, the one who waits ‘on the wall’ to see, to hear, to receive a word from the Lord to deliver to the elders at the gate. These ideas – prayer, watching (*shamar*), listening, hearing, representing speaking, obeying, are bound together.

“Whenever you hear a word from My mouth, give them a warning from Me,” and the purpose is *“to save his life”* – the wicked. This is redemptive. If he disobeys, the ambassador-prophet is absolved of responsibility. If, however, the warning is not delivered, *“I [God], will hold you responsible for his blood”* (Ezekiel 3:17-18). This is why earlier prophets demanded that their warnings be put in writing as a witness.

The Ambassador and His Faces

I suggest to you that we are at a very different time eschatologically. What God has allowed in the past, our cultural withdrawal, our silence, our comfort, He will allow no more. An anti-Christ

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spirit is rising. Its sounds are already being heard, and at times, they are becoming more militant and strident. Nations, kings, men and women of influence, must be warned, whether they heed or not. We are called to be ambassador-priest-prophets. And from this mission, there is no relief.

Five office gifts are given to the church.

“It was he [Jesus] who ‘gave gifts to people;’ he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare all God’s people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

These are not *gifts of the Spirit* (1 Corinthians 12). Nor are they *motivational gifts* (Romans 12:6-8). The five gifts of Ephesians are the *office gifts* of Christ. They describe Christ in action, divided five ways, and released through his church.

Christ then, has poured himself into the church and framed his authority in these different ways. The first of these five offices we meet is the *evangelist*, who gives us good news, and we, in believing, are regenerated. The next office we meet is that of a *pastor*, a shepherd, who loves us, and hunts us down when we are lost. He carries us, feeds us, nurtures us. The third office reflective of Christ is that of *teacher*. He challenges our thinking, stretches our paradigms, which grows us. The teacher watches the degree to which truth trues us. The fourth office we meet is the *prophet*. The prophet, like the pastor offers comfort, and like the teacher, edifies, but then, the prophet does something else – he corrects. He refuses to allow us to embrace ideas that are less than biblical or behaviors that are less than Christlike. The final office that we meet is that of the *apostle*. This individual stretches us. The nature of this office is missional – and from its chair, one can see over the next hill, into the next village, indeed, one can see the world. The apostolic office is in one sense, the combination of the other four, the apostle, being “sent” on mis-

sion. He evangelizes, pastors those who come to Christ; teaches them and correct them, and then moves on.

Everyone needs an *evangelist* in their life – not only the person who brought them to Christ, but someone infected with the good news, who is always sharing their faith. That moves us to share our faith. Everyone needs a *pastor*. Someone who cares, who loves, who knows you and calls you by name, who won't forget you. Who carries you and cares when you are wounded. Everyone needs a *teacher*, stretching them, challenging them, motivating them to learn and grow. Whether we want one or not, we also need a *prophet*. Someone who will speak truth to us – even if it is painful. Someone who loves us, yet sees our shortcomings, and points them out on occasion, not for embarrassment, but for our own good. Finally, we need someone with a global perspective. Someone who sees the world and the unfinished task, an *apostle* with an apostolic and missional vision.

Notice then.

- The **AMBASSADOR-EVANGELIST** – is a good news ambassador, offering the love of God to all, inviting others to know Christ. Caution: Evangelism, that is, an evangelistic invitation is not the best, first-action, when meeting the Mayor, or a person in a position of authority. There is often no bridge, no relationship established, that can carry heavy truth. Establish the relationship first. Love – unconditionally. Build a bridge of trust that can support heavy content.²⁵ In the past,

²⁵ I know the idea of waiting to present the gospel is contrary to many, perhaps to most evangelicals. It is rushed in part, due to the urgency created by the idea that the world as we know it could end in a moment, and those who have not 'prayed the sinner's prayer' will be lost. There is of course, an urgency. And there is no promise of tomorrow – but there are other things to consider. I am convinced that rushed, hurried-up evangelism produces less enduring commitments than those who weigh things, and make a serious life-time commitment, rather than seeking God as a quick fix. We think of evangelism as a decision rather than a journey in discipleship. We see it as an experience, rather than a relationship. We see it vertically, as a moment

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we have seen evangelism as a quick decision – detached from discipleship. But it is not merely information that is needed, but formation. Discipleship, the Jesus way, was in the context of relationships. That's the way Paul did it as well. The current culture may demand that we disciple people toward a decision for Christ and not press so quickly for that decision. Discipleship is not optional. It is possible to win the argument and lose the disciple. Value the relationship.

- The **AMBASSADOR-PASTOR**. This is the priestly, conciliatory stage at the high-water mark. Here, we care. We love. We affirm – if not the person, the chair, because all authority is established by God. Here we come to know the person by name, their family, their needs, their challenges. We, like shepherds, go out of our way to show grace. The bridge that is so necessary to convey the heavy blocks of prophetic truth, if necessary, is being strengthened.
- The **AMBASSADOR-TEACHER**. Now, we are moving to principled discussions. We inform. We have earned the right to talk, to be heard – and this is important. Too often, pastors and Christians ambush those in power, delivering petitions, ultimatums, and then disappearing. Here, we are in the room, perhaps, at some table of power – and we are able to say, “I represent ... and we are concerned about... and might we suggest ...” You may also have private moments in which you can begin

with God, rather than both vertically and horizontally, a moment with God that places us in a community, a family, an army, a new corporate body, the church, an expression of the Kingdom. With one-shot evangelism, one says the right words, gets baptized, and too often, little changes in their lives. With evangelism as the first step on a journey, in a community, where we are discipled, pastored, taught, stretched, confronted, and challenged apostolically – we get a different kind of convert. The current evangelism offers a prayer, recommends a church, and leaves the individual on their own. Love builds a bridge. It establishes a relationship. It takes time for questions. And when conversion comes, there is a relationship established for discipleship.

to serve in an advisor role on behalf of kingdom concerns. In such moments, with imposing rules and regulations which are often resisted due to church-state concerns, you want to find a reasonable way to make your case for morality, godliness, care for the poor, concerns about children and youth.

- The **AMBASSADOR-PROPHET**.²⁶ This is the role, the stage at which a warning, a caution is necessary. Quoting scripture will not be enough. You may want to cite case studies that reinforce your position. In the previous stage, you argued from the position of principle – on an if-then continuum. Now a line has been or is about to be crossed, and someone must speak. Share your message in a dispassionate manner. Be kind, but firm, and direct. Promise prayer and ongoing support.
- The **AMBASSADOR-APOSTLE**.²⁷ Now you are moving beyond your own city, county, state or nation – to the nations. You may be engaging nearby Muslims and their imam. You may be a delegation sent to meet with tribal leaders of an Unreached People Group. In some way, you are reaching across a chasm – linguistically, culturally, religiously, economically – for the purpose of mission. Your feet are shod with the gospel of peace. You are a peacemaker. You now see the nations.

²⁶ The term prophet is a problem for some traditions and sectors of the church. Here, I mean primarily, the black-and-white person, who draws lines, who has a keen sense of justice and righteousness, of right and wrong. While I personally would admit the charismatic dimension of the gift and office, it need not be a hindrance to understanding the tenor of this role.

²⁷ In the same way, as above. Many traditions do not use the appellation ‘apostle.’ And frankly, the term is used much more broadly and loosely, with far too many people laying claim to it, particularly in full-gospel and charismatic circles. I use the term here to suggest the need for a global viewpoint, for someone who has a large vision, one that stretches his friends and invites them to embrace a God-sized vision of global impact.

Review:

1. God cares about kings – about thrones, about the nature of authority and its character. Do we see the individual and not the king, not the throne, not the office? And if so, what are the implications of our blindness?
2. Discuss the idea of Amos, God speaks to prophets, to seers, revealing his counsel to prophets. Does He do that today? What is missing?
3. Look at the continuum from Ambassador-Priest to Ambassador-Prophet.
4. Review the different levels of the Ambassador's function.
5. Why is the bridge of love so important? And if it is, why have we failed to build bridges of love to leaders? In an ambassadorial sense?
6. The prophet-ambassadors of the Old Testament took their role seriously – they kept journals of their encounters with kings. Talk about it.
7. Look at the five postures of the ambassador – ambassador-evangelist, and so forth. This is different from the levels though you can see some overlap. Discuss this. Where do you fit? Can you see that this would be helpful in building an ambassador team?

PART 6

The Numbness Caused By Sin

Overview:

If there is one thing that should shock us, it is the grace of God. Rather than being stunned by grace, we think we deserve it. What does that say about us?

There is a parallel between us, our times, and both the condition and the people of Israel described in Isaiah 1. America seems to be following the tracks laid down by ancient Israel, millenniums ago. We, as they did, have open wounds. And we, like them, seem unaware of our sin — of how badly we are injured and wounded as a nation.

Note the obvious parallel in the phrase, “Your land is desolate, your cities are burned with fire [Recent riots]. Foreigners devour your fields [China, buying up America’s farms], desolation by strangers [the immigrant crisis...” We seem to be living Israel’s history. And if that is true, then, what is ahead for our nation? Can we expect any different outcome than they experienced?

Isaiah pronounced a ‘woe’ against Israel. A woe anticipates deep suffering from some misfortune or affliction, and the collective grief that follows. It predicts ruinous trouble and calamities. Is America in ‘woe’ territory?

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We often quote the passage, “Come now, let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow!” We see this as a promise of redemption. Actually it is a declaration that Israel has leprosy. God is pleading with His bride, Israel, “Come, let’s talk. You are sick. Your condition is going to worsen; the spots are not going away. You are going to die!” Old Testament scholars point out that the passage borrows the form for an ancient near east divorce proceeding. Without repentance, without healing, the relationship will soon end. “I will not live with you in this condition,” God seemed to be saying.

Still, God continues to speak – and He is speaking to America. Can you hear what he is saying? God longs for us to be shocked by grace – so deeply, that we return to Him. America needs to be shocked by the grace of God. She needs to turn to God.

The Numbness Caused by Sin

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” Jesus would lament, “She who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, yet you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37; Holman).

Proverbs 1:24-25 describes the sad state and hard heart of men,

“I have been calling you, inviting you to come, but you would not listen. You paid no attention to me. You have ignored all my advice and have not been willing to let me correct you” (Good News Translation).

My fear is that I am not shocked, we are not stunned, by the radical love of God, against the backdrop of His holiness and the fact of our sin. Without holiness, love is cheap. Without holiness, we cannot understand the depth and reach of God across the chasm of sin, against the nature of His own holiness. “O yes, we say in America, ‘I know God loves me!’” And we say that with an emphasis on *me*. “Wonderful me. The special and unique me.”

Narcissism is in full bloom in America – everyone is loveable and deserves a trophy. There is no sin and there are no sinners. “Why should God not love a wonderful person like me?” We will not experience transformational grace until we are shocked by the radical love of God in spite of the depth of our sin. We are blind to the degree to which it has distorted our perspective. We need to be awakened from our deep slumber. The “pleasures of sin” are the ultimate drug – and America is under the influence of the pleasures of sin – anesthetized.

When Isaiah addressed Israel, the description of the nation and its conditions were stark. They were so deeply in sin that they were in a state of shock. They were bleeding, but unaware of how badly they were wounded. The open sores and their inability to feel pain were an indication of leprosy, but they were in denial. In rebellion, they were justifying their behavior.

“I have raised children [Israel] and brought them up, but they have rebelled against Me” (Isaiah 1:2).

“Israel does not know; my people do not understand. Alas, O sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children of depravity! [vv. 3-4].

“They have forsaken the LORD; they despise the Holy One of Israel, and they have turned their backs on Him” (vv. 4).

The attempts at discipline had failed (v. 5). They continued to rebel.

“Your head has a massive wound, and your whole heart is afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head, there is no soundness - only wounds and welts and festering sores...” (vv. 5-6).

They were like a person coming from a terrible disaster, like a walking zombie, still in shock. They were in disarray, with untreated, unbandaged wounds – feeling no pain due to their traumatized state. Their wounds had not been cleansed nor soothed with oil. As a result of the sin and rebellion:

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“Your land is desolate; your cities are burned with fire. Foreigners devour your fields before you - a desolation demolished by strangers” (v. 7).

Are we talking about Israel – or America? *“Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers... listen to the instruction of our God, you people...” (v. 10).*

What follows is a volley of questions and charges:

- *“What good is your worship?”* God asks.
- *“I have had enough! I don’t delight in it. You appear before me and spread out your hands in prayer” (vv. 12, 15).*
- *“Your offerings, your worship is worthless – valueless, like your lives” (v. 13).*
- *“Your prayers – incense, I don’t want to hear. Your so-called holy convocations that do not move you to holiness are detestable to me” (v. 13).*
- *“I am tired of your church services!” (v. 14-15).*
- *“I am turning you off, no longer watching and no longer listening” (v. 15).*

But, this holy God, moved by love, cannot let go.

The Love that Can’t Let Go

“I hurt for you. I empathize. I care. I see your open wounds and bruises, but I also see your bloody hands. You are not innocent. You are both the victim, and at least in part, the cause” (v. 15).

“When you do pray, it is not with your sins in view, not with a heart of repentance, not with a disposition of self-examination and humility” (v. 15).

“You need to be cleansed, to ‘wash your hands’ that are covered with blood and examine your deeds. You need to ‘stop doing evil’ and learn again how to do right” (v. 16-17).

“You are a land where justice has been perverted – ‘Seek justice.’ You are a land where there are few checks on oppressors. Create

an equitable culture. 'Defend the fatherless,' the orphan. 'Plead the case of the widow' (v. 17).

Israel was to be a representative nation of ambassadors, the nation in the geographic heart of the ancient world, on the land bridge that connected the three continents of that world. Spiritually, they were not in a position to be such a representative nation. Nor is the church of America. So many of the same charges could be leveled against us. We are in sin, and in denial. We are in rebellion against the very codes of morality that were intended as guardrails for our own good.

The oft quoted passage that follows is grossly misunderstood.

"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they will become like wool" (v. 18).

This is often preached as an appeal for forgiveness and cleansing. It is actually a warning. Notice, sins here are described as scarlet. Nowhere else in the scripture are sins pictured as scarlet or as white as snow. Nowhere. We are not talking about the removal of sins here, but about the progressive stages of leprosy. It begins as a small red spot, deepens to a crimson color, and then becomes ulcerous, and white – the disease eating away at the flesh with its consequent nerve damage and loss of feeling. The wound appears with a scaly texture, white, ulcerous and expanding.

"*You have leprosy!*" the prophet says. "No, it is only a spot – it will disappear!" But it doesn't. The red spot deepens to a dark crimson color and then turns snow white. Sin here, does not go away; it simply changes colors. And where, in the Bible, is sin seen "as white as snow?"

Israel has leprosy. The phrase, "*Come now, let us reason together,*" is, in Hebrew, the technical legal language for the proceeding of divorce action. It is unthinkable – God is suggesting a divorce,

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from a leprous, unrepentant nation, Israel, His wife by covenant. There is hope – He is Jehovah Rapha, the healer. He can heal, if she is “*willing and obedient*,” (v. 19), if she will no longer persist in her sins. Then, she will live to “*eat the best of the land*” (v. 19). But if “*you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword*” (v. 20).

Sadly, “*the faithful city*” Jerusalem, “*has become a harlot!*” (v. 21), and the once faithful nation, America, has rejected the God of its Founders. Once a land “full of justice,” with courts that were fair, and yet compassionate, justice is now perverted. Once “*righteousness resided within her, but now only murderers!*” (v. 21).

In the early 1900s, the number of murders nationwide was in the hundreds – and that was unacceptable. In recent years, they have ranged annually from 18,000-20,000 – more than 50 per day, two every hour. In a matter of days, we see the number of unsolved murders that those who grew up a century ago saw over the course of an entire year – and this escalation of violence has occurred in a bit more than a century. It has accelerated as we secularized our values.

The problem. “*Your rulers are rebels, friends of thieves. They all love bribes and chasing after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, and the plea of the widow never comes before them*” (v. 23). This is why the ambassador is so solely needed. To call rulers back to God’s principles, back to integrity, away from bribes and greed. To nurture a culture among leaders who serve nobly, without personal rewards or benefits in view. Rulers that champion justice, who defend and protect the most vulnerable among us.

The Ambassador’s Offer

The ambassador-priest extends, in a spirit of grace, the offer of healing for the land, forgiveness, and grace. But such an offer cannot be spurned. God is not the one to be kept waiting. If the offer is rejected, there will come a moment of reckoning. “*The Lord GOD of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, declares*” (v. 24),

“I will turn My hand against you.” Now the roles shift. This is the voice of the ambassador-prophet. Since you have not cleansed yourself, *“I will thoroughly purge... I will remove all your impurities”* (v. 25). Such direct action by God may not be pleasant.

Yet here we find the commitment of God, in the case of Israel, to fulfil His purposes despite their obstructionism. Only with Israel may we say that God has such a covenant. Neither the prophet or God wants to see the nation destroyed. The intervention of God is an act of mercy. The prophet is not against the nation, but for it.

“I will restore your judges as at first, and your counselors as at the beginning. After that you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City.”

Even in Israel’s case, the national restoration will not be without repentance.

“Zion will be redeemed with justice, her repentant ones with righteousness. But rebels and sinners will together be shattered, and those who forsake the LORD will perish” (vv. 27-28).

Notice, God is concerned about Israel, and by extension, about nations – about kings and rulers and leaders, and their sin and its effect on their nation. He wants to call nations to Himself. And this is the grand role of the church, and its ambassadors. But this can only happen with a revival of righteousness characterized by repentance. The whole world sees the church – wounded, divided bleeding, in denial, and without repentance. There will be no national spiritual awakening without a revival of holiness in the church.

How can we call the nation to repent with blood on our hands? With such a high degree of sin in our camp? Isaiah, in chapter 6, had an encounter with God on His throne in the year King Uzziah died. He saw the throne of God, the fiery seraphim flying around and about it. The posts of the temple in heav-

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en were shaking and moving. Everything was seemingly destabilized but God Himself. *"Holy, holy, holy,"* the creatures of heaven cried antiphonally, one to another. The scene itself was overwhelming to the prophet.

His immediate response was a heightened awareness of his sin, his unclean lips, his being more like the people to whom he had been sent, than the God who had sent him. He knew at that moment that he could not fix himself. And that he could not fulfil his mission in his current condition. *"Woe is me,"* he cried out. *"I am a man of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of a people with foul, degraded, irreverent and sinful language."* The culture was compromised, degraded morally and spiritually, in language and decorum, in reverence and the lack of worshipful respect for God. And sadly, he knew, "So am I."

The Shock of Grace

Only as we, the people of God, are shocked about the condition of our own sin, and the degree of our compromise, the worthlessness of our shallow worship – can we rise to the condition that is needed for us to be ambassadors. The gospel we offer must be believable, because our transformed lives offer hope. The kingdom we represent must be characterized by congregations and lives that hunger for righteousness, which live in and practice *shalom*, peace and peace-making, and that with the sound of joy.

This is not achieved by works – it is only by grace. Seeing the degree of our sin against the backdrop of God's holiness should be shocking. Standing at the foot of the cross, we realize that our sin put Christ there. In that moment, His Father, find us, and forgive us, and offers to adopt us – if that does not shock us, nothing will. This is the gospel. That a holy God loves sinful men. That God, the Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, loves and has come to demonstrate that love to a creature called

man – that is the gospel. That upon repentance, and the confession of our sins, we are forgiven – that is the gospel.

Shocked by grace, we see salvation as pure gift, and not of ourselves. We turn, by grace, from sin. Shocked by God's mercy, in our broken condition, we are humbled by such unconditional love and its healing power. Shocked that God not only forgives, loves, cherishes, but that He adopts us as sons and daughters, we are elevated to unthinkable status, and profoundly grateful. Without such a view of grace, we cannot adequately serve as an ambassador of this King and His Christ.

God's appeal to others, to sinners, and kings, is out of extraordinary love. In an age of rationalism, truth was pushed to the fore, and evangelism has become far too often a matter of truth claims. We have become apologists – arguing the principles of faith, setting forth reasons to believe, appealing to the mind. The gospel has become, in some quarters, almost altogether propositional.

"Here are the gospel facts," the rational-left-brained evangelist declared, "Do you believe?" If so, one was pronounced 'saved,' and invited to baptism. We exhorted, echoing the rationalistic-enlightenment ideology, "Don't let feelings enter the equation – salvation is not a matter of feeling, but of facts." Of course, it is a matter of facts and gospel truth, but that truth is so incredible, so fantastic, so improbable, that such truth must have an affective dimension.

True conversion will not only touch the head, but the heart. It will right our rational thinking about God and sin and salvation; but it will also engage us emotionally. We are rarely moved to our best due to some fact alone. Somewhere, another source of energy is released – emotional or visceral, and we are driven by it, toward change. Shocked by grace, we shock others by the change in our lives. We are the evidence of both the love of God and the truth about sin, and the need to repent.

Review:

1. Should we be shocked, stunned, by the grace of God? And if we are not, what does that say about us?
2. Can you see a parallel between Isaiah 1 and the condition of Israel, and America today? Do we have open wounds? Are we unaware of our sin – of how badly we are bleeding?
3. Can you see the parallel in the phrase, “*Your land is desolate, your cities are burned with fire. Foreigners devour your fields [China, buying up America’s farms], desolation by strangers...*” Are we living Israel’s history? If so, what is ahead for our nation?
4. What is a ‘woe?’ Is America in ‘woe’ territory?
5. Talk about the interpretation here of the often quoted, “*Come now, let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow!*” – in this document, it appears, not as a promise of forgiveness, but as a declaration that Israel has leprosy.
6. Still, God continues to speak – Is he speaking to America? What is he saying?
7. God longs for us to be shocked by grace – so deeply, that we return to Him. Will America be shocked by grace? Will she turn to God?

PART 7

A Kairos Time

Overview:

We appear to be living in a Kairos time – an opportune time, a time of great change and upheaval. A time of great danger and great opportunity. But the opportunity is available only to those who discern their time.

Opportune times mean open doors. Power shifts occur. These are major moves on the global chess board. In such times, God sends diplomats to tyrants. And we have to get ready for this job. In the days of Israel's captivity in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be a prophet to Pharaoh. He liberated a nation from bondage and led them to freedom. The mission was not easy, but God's finger was evident and Yahweh went to war against the gods of Egypt showing them to be powerless. This is the ultimate role of the ambassador—prophet – deliverer. To see cities, nations, peoples liberated to serve God. But that also demands that the ambassador stand before the king.

Before Israel, the northern kingdom, collapsed as a nation, Elijah was the prophetic-ambassador from God to king Ahab. He was, again, the lone prophet speaking truth and warning of God's judgment. He called for a national solemn assembly to demonstrate the

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futility of serving Baal. He hoped that in one day, in one victorious moment, the nation could be changed – but, its roots were too deeply enmeshed in idolatry. He was followed by Elisha, whose ambassadorial function was more diplomatic. He died giving advice to a king (1 Kings 13:14-20).

Before Judah fell, Jeremiah was a prophet, a lone prophet, to Jerusalem and to the nation. Babylon had risen to power. In 586 BC, they destroyed the city and the temple and exiled the population. Then they faltered under the weight of the Medo-Persian Empire. Daniel had been taken into captivity at a young age around 605 BC. He had been in Babylon for almost two decades when Jerusalem was destroyed. Living in the midst of Babylon's idolatry, and its hostility to Judah and God's people, even at a tender age, Daniel was faithful to Yahweh. He navigated what must have seemed to him, to be diplomatic rapids. He stood, as prophet, before Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful ruler on the planet. And he spoke God's word to that tyrant. He survived to speak as a prophet to Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar, also speaking truth to power.

In the days before the crucifixion of Christ, Jesus testified before Pilate and King Herod. Before the fall of Jerusalem, Paul reportedly stood before Nero, as he had before Jewish leaders in various cities, particularly Jerusalem, and also before Governors Felix and Festus and King Agrippa. In the days before the Reformation, Luther stood before the Council appointed by the Church and was then kidnapped for his own protection. Major shifts were occurring. The alliances of nations were realigned.

The testimonies of these men before rulers and leaders are indicators of heavy pieces moving on the global chess board. In every age, during Kairos times, like ours, God raises up ambassadors. What tyrant on earth now needs an ambassador? Are you ready to serve?

Daniel was an Ambassador-Prophet, sent by Yahweh, but he was also in a pool of false prophets – and so are we. He had to navigate rocky waters. He had to stay true to God, and to His message in

the confusing matrix of multiple spiritual perspectives and practices. And in doing so, he had to avoid open conflict with the false prophets of these religious systems. They must have despised him, and they proved that by having him thrown to the lions (Dan. 6:3-7). We must learn to navigate our way through a sea of multiple false and godless religious voices. And speak to power, with truth and clarity, and yet, respect.

Daniel 'saw' visions that give him insight into the affairs of nations (Dan. 7:13-28). There are sections of the church that now have no space for such revelation. Others may put too much confidence in them. We desperately need God's perspective, divine insight. In Daniel's book we find a bit of this wisdom encoded in the structure of the book.

This is one of the most insightful perspectives in the Bible. And it is the chiasmic structure of Daniel chapters 1 - 7. The implication of this A-B-C-D-C-B-A structure is enormous. The structure is framed by an outer layer depicting the march of earthly kingdoms (Chapters 2 and 7). The B tiers speak to the persecution of the righteous (Chapters 3 and 6). The C strata focuses on God's intervention into the lives of kings, and their pride and irreverence (Chapters 4 and 5). At the center of the chiasm is the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar. The heart of the king, even of Babylon, is in the hand of God.

Daniel is a great example of speaking truth, respectfully, to power. Notice how different these outcomes were with Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. That informs us of our mission.

The Ambassador and Kairos Moments

All of us live for a time and *in* a time. For those of us alive now, this is our season, and we must discern what God is doing and saying in the earth. Specifically, to us, as the church, the bride-partner of Christ, his agents in the earth for these times. This is a critical season of

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international change and disruption – economically, socially, internationally, in terms of the power balance of nations and the rise of a global anti-Christ spirit. We might have preferred quieter times, but we cannot choose such things. Nor can we shirk our duty – to cities or nations, whether foreign or to our own. Nor can we pack our exit bags, sing songs and hear sermons at the church that please us and remain silent before the world. Such a decision would be cowardly. We must warn our children and grandchildren of the coming beastly system. It would be foolhardy not to do so. Every father, and grandfather, should have a ‘come to Jesus’ family gathering, a solemn assembly, in which they present the case for Christ and plead with their family to know him and find shelter in him.

Christ will not always be outside the door waiting (Revelation 3:20). Our ministry, and that of the ambassador, as is the ministry of the evangelist, is a *kairos* matter, timed by the Spirit. There are seasons of openness and opportunity, and there are missed moments. “*See, your house is left to you desolate,*” Jesus would say. They had missed their moment. “*I tell you, you will never see Me again until you say, ‘He who comes in the name of the Lord is the blessed One!’*” (Matthew 23:38-39).

Proverbs declares, because you

“... would not listen, you paid no attention... you ignored my advice... when you get into trouble, I will laugh at you. I will make fun of you when terror strikes— when it comes on you like a storm, bringing fierce winds of trouble, and you are in pain and misery. Then you will call for wisdom, but I will not answer. You may look for me everywhere, but you will not find me” (Proverbs 1:26-27).

Grace is not to be exploited. God, though loving, demands respect – there can be no qualitative relationship without such veneration. We have offended God by our sin. We cost Him the death of His Son. And now, can we escape His wrath if we

choose to irreverently turn Him away and treat His overtures of love with disdain? In such a case, our heart has revealed us as contemptible, and resistant to grace.

"I called, you refused. I would have, you would not." Whatever the spiritual disposition, even if we anticipate and experience rejection, we must nevertheless make an overture of mercy and grace. The response is in the hands of the sinner. We must trust the Holy Spirit. Our role before each political official or community influencer, is a critical part of a larger process. Such a moment of 'witness' - this is a judicial team - creates a doorway into the courtroom of heaven, a moment before God, a demand for accountability. It forces a decision - not by us, but due to the work of the Spirit. We do not need to labor to make the encounter solemn or heavy. That is the work of the Spirit. Yet, we must always be cognizant of the *awe*-full responsibility of representing Christ, the mystery of the prerogative we offer. It could become a hinge point of change, not only for a community leader, but a city, indeed, a nation.

The hinge moment may result in either openness or resistance, and both have incredible consequences. In a posture of refusal or resistance, one only has to do nothing. But the consequences of inaction may be eternal. The ambassador cannot force the matter, nor can they underestimate the critical implications of the moment. Opening will invite God's attentive presence, His blessing. And resisting will leave one to himself, and to the ploys of the Evil One. And that is heartbreaking to God, both Creator and Redeemer. This is what MacLaren calls "this energy and intensity of divine desire" communicated through us, as ambassadors.

Psalm 2 declares that *"nations plan rebellion, and the people engage in useless plots. Kings revolt and rulers plot together."* Such godlessness ignores God's claim on nations and the earth itself. These people seek to be free of the constraints of morality and God's sovereignty. *"From his throne in heaven the Lord laughs and mocks*

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their feeble plans" (Psalm 2:4). The futility, the ignorance of such actions, the inflated sense of importance and power, provide a moment of humor in heaven. The bluster of a stubborn king is only a cause for the knowing smile of the sovereign God. "He warns them in anger," and at times, He may "terrify them with His fury." But His throne on Zion, His sacred hill, is unmoved. There, He has installed His king – Jesus, the Christ, Lord. He is not only the King, but the royal son. "Ask," the Father is saying to the Son, "and I will give you all the nations; the whole earth will be yours" (Psalm 2:8). Don't personalize rejection by someone in a position of authority. They may not take your desire for an appointment seriously and if you have your moment with them, they may not respond positively. Take note of Psalm 2 again. Such leaders may not like you simply because of the one you represent. Notice Psalm 2. They don't take God seriously. He laughs. Perhaps you and I shouldn't laugh. The weight of nations and the souls of their kings and queens is a pretty heavy load. Only God can turn such hearts. Our role is to stand before them in behalf of Christ, in his stead. The heavy lifting is done by the Holy Spirit.

We must, then, be sober. We must shake ourselves free from the cultural thinking imposed on us for years – the "wall of separation" between the church and the state, between private faith and the public sector. This has resulted in our capitulation to secularism, and it has produced a culture without God, indeed, one that is hostile to God – and that has led to immorality. Radical personal confusion, even of one's identity has followed. Social chaos is the consequence (Rom. 1:24-32).

The goal is not a state church, or the imposition of Judeo-Christian values onto the culture as law. We do desire the integration of those values – if not those values, then, what other values will guide our culture? Hyper-individualism? Relativistic ethics? Marxism? Atheism? We also desire for godly, moral and ethical leaders. If not, what is our standard for leaders? Who do

they emulate? What pattern do they follow? We want a nation characterized by moral order and reason. It escapes most individuals that the founding documents speak not of rights, but of “*inalienable* rights.” Of the “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” and of our entitlement coming from God. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are *created* equal, that they are *endowed by their Creator* with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The only source of *inalienable* are those that are divinely given – not by men, not by the court, not by congress, but by God – the Creator.

In 1962, the nation experienced a kind of judicial coup. The effect was to sever our nation from its historical foundation and its godly roots. Suddenly up was down, and right was wrong, and prayer was illegal, and the Ten Commandments were removed from public view. Faith was ousted from the public square. The church was eventually muzzled. Faith, the Christian faith, was squeezed out of public space. Clergy, a once respected profession, was sidelined. Baccalaureates ceased – the ceremony that stood beside graduations, essentially a worship event presided over by community clergy. Religion as public discourse became taboo, and then, in some places, tacitly illegal. No-fault divorce followed. Marriage was no longer a life-time sacred bond, but a temporary domestic arrangement. Individual rights and liberties trumped the family, and ultimately, any kind of social bond that infringed on radical personal rights. This was a radical shift. A nation once organized on the back of family life and generational relationships, now exalted individual rights. Nothing was to stand in the way of personal liberty – not marital fidelity, or parental responsibilities, or faith practices, or ecclesiastical admonitions. The ‘60s exploded with libertinism.

In the act of divorce, we disposed of the one we had, before God, pledged to faithfully love all our lives. Then the court then normalized abortion, the fruit of marriage, taking the life

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of the unborn – seen by some as an impediment to their liberty. Marriage was the first casualty, followed by the sacrifice of children at the altar of expediency. Adultery, fornication, and murder – all legal. We proceeded to end the life of almost 70 million unborn children. We then sanctified gay marriage and introduced 72 (or more) different genders. We proceeded as a culture, to imagine that we could free ourselves from gender restraints and redefine ourselves. We could be free of the Creator's male-female limitations. We could imagine ourselves to be something other than human. We seemed, for a season, to have lost our minds.

Clearly, Biblical faith and its values cannot be privatized. God wants nations to be influenced by His righteousness and justice. He wants nations to be joined to Him – morally, and by the spiritual affinity of their people and leaders. Yet, a theocracy is not in view. This is a bottom-up movement in which hearts are changed.

From Diplomats to Tyrants

This gift of the nations to Christ by the Father (Psa. 2:8) will be preceded, the scriptures indicate, by one great last gasp of the Evil One. He will lose his place in the middle-heaven and be cast to the earth (Rev. 12:7-9). Infuriated, his rage will reach its zenith against God and anyone who dares to associate or identify with this God of the Bible and His Christ (Rev. 13:7; Dan. 7:21). We should be both warmed and chilled by the structure found in Daniel chapters 2-7.

Earlier, I mentioned the A-B-C-D-C-B-A structure in Daniel. Here is what is meant by that. In Daniel, chapters 2 and 7, we have the same vision from radically different points of view. Both visions represent the march of global empires over the course of human history. From the perspective of Nebuchadnezzar, these human empires are one great giant man with a head of gold, a chest of silver, a belly of brass, legs of iron

and feet of iron and ceramic clay. This glorious global, corporate image of humanity is envisioned as highly valued gold and silver, and bronze, etc. Christ, in contrast, the true human, is only a rock, an ordinary stone. Essentially worthless (Daniel 2).

In chapter 7, we have the same march of empires, this time from the perspective of Daniel. He sees them not as a grand corporate image of humanity, made of gold and silver, etc., but as a parade of terrible beasts, rising mysteriously out of the sea, out of chaos. They are a degradation of humanity, less than human, a composite of violent and bloodthirsty, war-mongering governments. The first was like a winged lion that was humanlike. The second was like a bear, a carnivore, with three ribs in his mouth – devouring flesh, feeding off humans. The third was a four-winged, four-headed leopard – quick and stealth and rapidly conquering. The fourth was *“terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns”* (Daniel 7:7, NIV). This final beast is so terrible, there is no analogy that can describe it in a rational manner.

Then Daniel saw among the ten horns, *“another horn, a little one... came up among them.”* Notice the violence that follows. The horns of the beasts went to war against one another, *“three of the first horns were uprooted before it,”* before the little horn. There is a political, civil war inside the beastly system, and between its kings. Like the lion, who stood up like a human, this little *“horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully”* (Daniel 7:8).

Suddenly, in heaven, as the scenes on the earth unfold, God convenes the divine court. *“As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat”* (Daniel 7:9). Immediately, Daniel notices the nature of the divine throne. *“His throne was flaming with fire... a river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him”* (vv. 9-10). This is a vision of a throne like no other, a ‘fiery’ throne,

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one of judgement who could contend with such a throne. The little horn was seen waging *“war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people...”* (vv. 22-23). His leash is short. He is defeated before he begins. On earth, his power and cruelty are formidable, but from heaven: perspective, he is finished before he beings.

In contrast to this series of earthly regimes and leaders – we dare not miss the point. Daniel is characterizing this parade of earthly leaders as beastly, warlike and subhuman. In contrast, he sees *“one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.”* This is Jesus, the Christ – the true human. *“He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed”* (vv. 13-14).

Be patient.

God and the March of History

All this is a backdrop for the world that we or our children are facing. Chapters 2 and 7 are descriptions of the same historical-prophetic scenes from very different perspectives. They are frames for the content between chapters 3-6. And what is that? In brief, we find the persecution of the righteous in chapters 3 and 6.

First, in chapter 3, the “three Hebrew children” – now grown, had become government officials in Babylon. They had risen to the status of rulers, despite their Jewish roots. Suddenly, they were caught in a moment of forced worship and state-imposed idolatry (3:1-6, 8, 13-14, 16-17, 24-25, 17-29). Unwilling to bow before the idol and embrace the mandatory state religion, they were sentenced to die in a fiery furnace. The Angel of the Lord rescued them (Dan. 3:24-25).

In chapter 6, Daniel was found in prayer, defying a govern-

ment edict preventing such a practice (6:7-12). He was to be fed to lions. But God miraculously shut the mouths of the lions. The point is that inevitably, the godly are persecuted by ungodly regimes. Forced idolatry and worship are common. Or we encounter a prohibition against the free worship of a non-approved God and the suppression of personal faith practices, specifically, prayer and Bible use. But then we see the protection of God. We discover His faithfulness and we are offered examples of miraculous intervention.

In chapter 3, observers readily expose the non-compliant Hebrews to the king with the hope of their deaths (3:12). And in chapter 6, there is the surveillance of the righteous Daniel, who does not hide his devotion to Yahweh (6:11-12). Both have their detractors, their enemies. In chapter 3, the Hebrew rulers are cast into a fiery furnace and escape miraculously due to the intervention of the Angel of the Lord (3:16-18, 26-28). In chapter 6, Daniel was thrown to the lions but escaped unharmed (vv. 16-17, 20-21). He testified that God set his Angel to shut the mouths of the lions. Note the angelic activity in both instances of prosecution.

The message is clear. Believers, caught in a godless totalitarian, pagan regime are not to bow their knee in complicity to forced idolatry, whether or not God delivers them (3:17-18). Nor are they to be silent, even under the pressure of the government. Nor should they cease to practice their devotional life. That is because of God's sovereignty. These believers may be the exception in that they escaped death, and gloriously so, creating a moment for God's glory (3:26-29; 6:26-27).

In these two cases in Daniel, the brave servants of God not only survive, but thrive. The three Hebrews are promoted (3:30), and Daniel is said to have prospered (6:28). Again, the message is, "Don't bow or bend, don't be silent, don't stop praying. Before kings, stand for your faith."

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Chapters 4 and 5 occupy the center place in the chiasm of Daniel 2-7. They focus not on people of faith being squeezed and persecuted, indeed, facing death due to their faith, but on the monarchs themselves. In chapter 4, we meet the tyrant and godless Nebuchadnezzar, who imagines himself as the greatest man who has ever or will ever live. But he is troubled by a dream. This is God at work in the heart and mind of the king. In the dream, Nebuchadnezzar, like a great tree, was about to be cut down. What is the meaning? God was going to deal with his pride (Daniel 4:20-27). In chapter 5, we meet his equally recalcitrant grandson, Belshazzar.

This is informative, reminding us of the simple proverb, *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turns it whithersoever he will”* (KJV, Proverbs 21:1). The NIV says, *“In the LORD’s hand the king’s heart is a stream of water that he channels...”* The NLT says, *“The king’s heart is ... directed by the LORD; he guides it wherever he pleases.”* In spite of what we might immediately conclude, both leaders, Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:34-35, 37, 5:2-3), and Belshazzar are aware of the God of Israel (Daniel 5:18, 22).

Nebuchadnezzar had what appeared to be a psychotic break and when he emerged, he did so as a believer (Daniel 4:34-37). This conversion of the king, the tyrant, the golden head of humanistic history, is at the very center of the chiasm. Belshazzar goes in the opposite direction. He profanes the holy vessels that the Babylonians took from Solomon’s temple in a sacrilegious and disrespectful exercise of arrogance. A thousand people saw the finger of God write judgment on the wall, and that night, Belshazzar’s kingdom fell, and Babylon fell under the power of the Median empire. God sets up kings and kingdoms, and God takes them down. God sends kings, even wicked kings, ambassador prophets to speak His word and make it clear.

One more time, watch the movement:

CHAPTER 2. The March of Empires – **the giant statue, a man, humanism personified**, with a golden head. This is Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream; he is the golden head. Christ appears as a mere ‘rock,’²⁸ but smites the image, destroying it.

CHAPTER 3. Persecution – of the three Hebrew rulers, and their supernatural rescue. Message: Don’t bow, **don’t acclimate to idolatry**. Expect Angelic protection.

CHAPTER 4. The Great Emperor Nebuchadnezzar – **judgement** for pride

4:34-37 - **The conversion of
Nebuchadnezzar**

CHAPTER 5. The great Emperor Belshazzar – **judgement** for irreverence

CHAPTER 6. Persecution – Daniel is thrown to the Lions. Message: **Keep praying**. Don’t be Intimidated into silence. An angel shut the lion’s mouth.

CHAPTER 7. The March of the Empires – **as a parade of beasts**. Daniel’s dream. The emergence of Christ, the true man. The end of the nightmare of beastly reigns on the earth.

The message here is not explicit in the text; it is implicit, encoded in the structure. Here is the encouragement that no matter how great the tyrant’s power, God is still sovereign. Even if persecution intensifies and threatens one’s death – don’t bow to idolatry. God is able to deliver; to cool the furnace. Angels are about us, even if we are unaware. Their mission is to assist

²⁸ The contrast is purposeful. In Nebuchadnezzar’s world, Christ was not extraordinary, he was mere ‘rock,’ not gold or silver or even bronze or iron. The values are upside down. But in the vision of Daniel, the earthly empires are a parade of beastly regimes. They are not human. In contrast, Jesus is the human, the true prototype. Again, the values are upside down.

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us in fulfilling our mission as a witness before kings and nations. We may be delivered from or through, to heaven itself. Don't stop praying, God can shut the mouth of lions. And, remember, the heart of the king is in the hand of God. Things may appear to be out of control, but God can and will judge, and in the end, the rock will smite the grand construct of humanistic domination and in the face of beastly, ghastly tyrants. A true man will emerge to bring global peace and establish God's kingdom. And finally, God can save the king. Even tyrants can be converted.

The Ambassador: A Witness

There is one more point to be made, perhaps the most important in relation to our study. That point is obvious, but perhaps not plainly evident. Notice. In the midst of paganism's triumph, Daniel and his three Hebrew compatriots, were witnesses of God speaking truth to power. They are truly ambassadors and models for us. Daniel developed the capacity to survive and shine in a purely and utterly pagan empire (Daniel 4:8f, 19-20f; 5:11f, 28; 6:3f, 5, 21-22, 24-28). He was in the class of advisors, astrologers and the like (Daniel 3:2-3, 8), and yet he was distinct from them. He was not at war with them or in a state of compromise. At times, his advice, his intervention, saved them – though it is doubtful that they were grateful (Daniel 2:24). This is grace. They, on the other hand, appeared content to see him thrown to the lions and his comrades fed to the fire.

God needs, in the darkest of times, men and women who can and will, by grace, speak truth to power. Daniel was forthright, blunt, not showing any signs of intimidation when he interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar that exiled him temporarily (Daniel 4:22, 24-25, 27). "*Renounce your sins,*" he advised the king. He was likewise candid and direct when he interpreted the handwriting on the wall at the feast of Belshazzar with a thousand important guests present. He wanted no gifts. He

could neither be bought nor sold (Daniel 5:13, 16-17, 22-23).

Those with diplomatic poise are needed in the courts of kings in times when empires rise and fall, when emperors seem unshakable. Jesus predicted that in such times, the last days, his followers would be summoned before kings and councils (Matthew 10:18). There has never been a time when Daniels' were needed so acutely.

Review:

1. Discuss the idea of Kairos time – are we living in a Kairos time?
2. God sends diplomats to tyrants. Are you up for this job? This is Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar? Paul before Nero? Jesus before Pilate? Luther before the Council? What tyrant in the earth needs an ambassador?
3. Daniel as an Ambassador-Prophet, in a group of false prophets – how did he navigate? How did he stay true? How did he avoid open conflict? How do we navigate our way in a sea of multiple false and godless religious voices?
4. Daniel 'saw' visions that give him insight into the affairs of nations. Can we make a space for that kind of revelation?
5. Look carefully at the chiasmic structure of Daniel. What are the implications? What is the theology of that structure?
6. Daniel is a great example of speaking truth, respectfully, to power. Agree?
7. Notice how different the outcomes were – with Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. How does that inform our mission?

PART 8

Accountability Time

Overview:

What might have provoked a war between God, His kingdom, and the kingdoms of this world, has instead, become the occasion for an offer of peace, a truce. There are huge implications here. The cross – the attack of humanity on God, in Christ, turned out to be the place of peace, reconciliation and healing. This is upside down.

God has two claims on the earth – Creation and Redemption. Both have been denied Him by the courts of the earth and its thrones. One has been denied by the supposition of evolution (Creation) and the other by the denial of the resurrection (Redemption). Neither denial will prevent the claim of Christ on the earth at his return.

The world demands our silence – God, on the other hand, demands that we witness, that we proclaim good news. For six decades, we have obeyed the culture. The results are disastrous. Now we must plot a new course.

That course is a ministry of peace, through the work of the ambassador. In Greek, the term used is also translated elder. It implies maturity for the role of the ambassador. The idea of ‘statesman’ is a good way to see the term.

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The ambassador is to parakaleo – to call for, to exhort, to encourage. Or to call alongside. This is the foundational function of the ambassador. It is grounded in the office of priest. It is the call for the church, for example, to encourage community leaders, the mayor, a governor, etc. And to do so by coming alongside them. The ultimate goal is reconciliation.

The greatest tool in the arsenal of the ambassador is the transformation of their own lives by the Holy Spirit – the way they smell (fragrance), what they speak (they are a letter from God), how they look – they shine (they carry the glory of God). “Who is sufficient for this?” Paul asks. The answer – none of us. This role demands deep dependence on God.

God's Claim - Rejected

Jesus told the story of a landowner who symbolized the Father, the Creator of the land. He “*planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a wine press, and built in it a tower,*” and then he leased the vineyard to vine-growers, not relinquishing either his ownership or share in the profits. This is the idea of stewardship. The earth, we are told, is the Lords and the fullness thereof, and they that live in it (Psalm 24:1).

In due time, the true owner of the vineyard sent his servants to collect his portion of the harvest. Jesus says they “*beat one, killed another, and stoned another*” (Matthew 21:35). The owner then sent additional servants, more than he had sent previously, and they were treated in the same manner. “*Afterward,*” Jesus said,

“...he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son’ But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let’s kill him and take possession of his inheritance!’ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.” (Matthew 21:37-39).

Of course, the son is Christ himself. And the amazing grace of God is that instead of judgement, at least not immediately, there is an offer of amnesty. What might have provoked a war between God, His kingdom and the kingdoms of this world, has instead, become the occasion for an offer of peace, a truce.

The idea of God's claim to our earth as its Creator, as the true God, is lost to us as a culture, and even as a church. Far too many pastors and seminaries have rejected Creationism. We have created a Christianity that belongs to another world, which prepares us for heaven, and is largely irrelevant to daily life except for small doses of comfort and devotional ideas. It has nothing to do with running a city or governing a state or nation. God forbid. We have embraced the doctrine of separation of church and state so thoroughly that we do not dare think of public officials and their office as sacred, as stewards of God's moral government. This wall of separation is not, of course, in the constitution. Nor is it in scripture - and that is the most important consideration. Further, it was not the idea of the Framers. It was a wall built from the action of the Supreme Court due to its ruling on prayer and Christian practices in the public space. It is a reverse interpretation of the first amendment, and a misinterpretation of a phrase in a mere letter from Thomas Jefferson.²⁹

²⁹ Thomas Jefferson, "To the Danbury Baptist," a letter, January 1, 1802. See: <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>. Library of Congress online. Jefferson wrote that he believed that religion, faith (personal beliefs) was a deeply personal matter into which the state should not interfere. Such matters of the heart were between man and his God, and inviolable. For such things, Jefferson noted, a man "owes account to none other for his faith or his worship" but to God. Such matters are beyond "the legitimate powers of government." Government, he explained, can put restraint on actions, but not opinions. Jefferson spoke of contemplating "with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people," referring to the practices of faith and prayer, which he declared, "their legislature should [quoting the founding documents] 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.'" And then he added, the troublesome line, "...thus building a wall of separation between Church & State." It is that phrase which has been turned on its head. Jefferson, one of the Founders, and then the President, affirmed his adherence "to this expression

God's People - Silenced

Even if such an idea was constitutional, we, as believers, would be required to ignore it. Peter and the apostles faced a gag order. Notice how they responded.

“Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to listen to you rather than God. For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.’ After further threats they let them go” (Acts 4:18-21a).

What is right – in the sight of God? When believers are commanded to be silent by rulers and they have also been commanded to witness by Christ – to whom do they listen? Obviously, God. That does not eliminate the prerogative of authorities to judge or to prosecute. *“Judge for yourselves,”* Peter knew the prerogative of the judges, he did not dispute their authority. But he also made it clear that they could not rely on human law alone. No, they had to judge from another perspective, *“whether it is right in God’s sight to listen to you rather than God.”* Believers have no choice, no matter what judges may decide. *“For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”*

of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience.” That is what was meant by the “free exercise of religion.” He continued, “I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties” – one of the chief social duties, being prayer and worship, commitment to the morals of Scripture. “I reciprocate,” he wrote, “your kind prayers...” In other words, I, the President, am praying for you, as you are praying for me. I am praying, he wrote, “for the protection & blessing of the common father [God] and creator of man, and tender you for yourselves & your religious association, assurances of my high respect & esteem.” A non-religious man? A deist? Two days after he penned the letter, on Sunday, January 3, he attended a public worship service, as was his practice, in the Hall of Representatives in the Capitol Building. Historians indicate that attendance at Sunday worship was a regular practice of Jefferson, as it was for other Presidents of the early era.

Nevertheless, in the United States, since the 1960s, we have been silenced. Peter was not being belligerent. Neither his actions nor attitude were couched in rebellion. He was invoking what might be understood as “the conscience clause.” He had to follow his heart, being as gracious to the authorities as possible. He was, as Jefferson expressed, engaging in authority that was ‘inviolable’. a matter between himself and God. Jefferson believes that this was “owed” to God. Doing otherwise would have been detrimental to true faith and the nature of Peter’s witness.

Why has the upside-down ruling of the Supreme Court stood now for six decades and counting? There is a simple reason. We wanted it. The right to public prayer was not that important to us. The atmosphere in which our kids were educated, we concluded, did not necessitate prayer or a public recognition of God. The gag order on prayer, as it came to be applied to all public space, allowed our silence on issues of faith. We were off the hook. No longer obligated to be salt and light – prayer was illegal. Talking openly about one’s faith was, culturally, socially, frowned, impolite. The problem is not the secularists, not altogether. It is the problem of tepid Christians.

God’s Ambassador - Mature

The Greek word for ambassador is *presbeuó*, the term for *elder*, the one who takes precedence. It refers to one who is older, and by inference, wiser and mature. It implies an individual, due to their carriage and demeanor, their experience, who is venerated, respected. They are qualified to act as an ambassador, to speak as an emissary for the kingdom of God.

To this end, we are ambassadors for Christ, sent to negotiate with leaders, regarding reconciliation with God. Tyndale says, “We are messengers in the room of Christ” – operating from his office, his room. This term *presbeuomen* is from *presbus*, one who is mature

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and seasoned. The ambassador is a “minister of the highest rank, employed by one prince or state at the court of another, to manage the concerns of his own prince or state, and representing the dignity and power of his sovereignty.”³⁰ The ambassador is sent to do or say what the sovereign himself would do or say if he were present. The ambassador delivers a message or otherwise makes the will of the sovereign known. He negotiates on certain matters – all to the end of peace and reconciliation.

An ambassador is a statesman, trusted and respected. He is knowledgeable, in the know! He is in-between, and clearly a representative of a king and kingdom to which he is loyal, and yet, he is trusted by those to whom he is sent.

He is there to *parakaleó*, “to call to or for, to exhort, to encourage.” The term can mean to summon or to entreat, to beg – indicating the tenderness of the ambassador’s pleas on behalf of God. Or, to more boldly admonish or warn. And at times, the term can mean to comfort or console. It is a compound from *pará*, “close-beside” and *kaléo*, “to call.” The ambassador comes close to, beside the other party, building a relationship, creating the trust necessary for access, and counsel. He represents his king in speaking to another king and kingdom. He is in-between. But he is not impartial. And he is a straight shooter. His facts are true and inconvertible. He offers evidence that can stand up in court – that is, in God’s court.

Parakaleó is the root of *parákletos*, a *legal* advocate. This is another aspect of the ambassador’s function. It is closely related to the function of an intercessor. This is the art of making the appeal, of entreating, imploring, pleading for a particular outcome.

The term *deomai* means “I request or beg.” It is often used for prayer. It is an *entreaty*, an appeal tied to some *treaty*, to a covenant, to law. “I want,” the proposition goes, “on the basis of ...” It is

³⁰ Matthew Henry Commentary on 2 Cor. 5:20. See: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/5-20.htm.

often translated as beseech, a form of prayer. The compound is from *deō*, meaning to “have a deep personal need, to be in want.” And *déesis*, the nature of the need, being a “a felt-need.” This pressing sensate need arises from some lack, and as a result, an *urgent appeal*. This deep need motivates a passionate appeal.

The ambassador trades in such wants and lacks. The lack is not on the part of God. It is the unrealized need of the one to whom he is sent. The kings and magistrates, the wealthy merchants, the carnal influences, men and women of wealth – they lack. Power and prosperity sedate them, numbing their pain, quelling their inner need. The ambassador, on behalf of God, seeks, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to wake up a desire, a longing for God, and for righteousness. The ambassador begs and pleads, on behalf of God, for kings and those in authority to know God and do the right thing.

The goal is *katallassó*, to reconcile. Again, we have a compound from *katá*, meaning “down to an exact point,” intensified by *allássō*, “to change.” This indicates a *decisive* change, a switching of sides. The term is applied to marriage, and more often, to a sinner who is reconciled to God. He is changed, “down to the exact point” of agreement, of oneness – he is reconciled.

The ultimate goal of the ambassador is the salvation of the king, the influencer, the one in authority or with some level of prestige and influence, the one to whom he or she has been sent. An interesting use of the term *katallássō* was exchanging, trading. It could refer to the common practice of making change as a merchant would do. By exchanging coins, you purchase an object. You redeem it. Here, change made is from enmity to friendship, from separation to reconciliation. The ambassador’s role is to make change, by exchange, by redemptive encounters, by trading information and friendship in building trust, with the goal of reconciliation.

The gospel of reconciliation is at the heart of true preaching:

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“Christ did not send me,” Paul declared, *“to baptize but to preach the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 1:17). We have been *“approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel”* of reconciliation (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

Paul learned that the role of ambassador guaranteed no free pass. He was in chains for his work. *“I am an ambassador in chains”* (Ephesians 6:20). His incarceration was not regretted, nor did it muzzle him. *“I am in chains now,”* he would say, but *“still preaching this message as God’s ambassador.”*

“I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God’s ambassador. So, pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should” (Ephesians 6:20 NLT).

God’s Church – Immature and Divided

The Corinthians are, despite their imperfections, believers. They responded to God’s grace and were reconciled with God. Paul is concerned that having been reconciled, they have stalled in their development, never moving to God’s redemptive purpose, *“We then, as workers together with God, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”* In vain? Paul is suggesting a pointless Christianity. One that is idle, unproductive, that has aborted purpose and mission. One that is fruitless and futile. The American church is similarly stuck. We are saved – and ready, we think, and worthy, to go to heaven, but not interested in being missional in our city. How is such a thing possible?

Corinth was a nasty town. The MacArthur Study Bible says of Corinth, “Even by pagan standards of its own culture, Corinth became so morally corrupt that its very name became synonymous with debauchery and moral depravity. To ‘corinthianize’ came to represent gross immorality and drunken debauchery.”³¹ The NIV Study Bible “repeats the common claim that Corinth

³¹ *The MacArthur Study Bible*, “Introduction to 1 Corinthians.” See: <https://bbhchurchconnection.wordpress.com/2015/01/09/how-immoral-was-corinth-really/>.

at one time had 1,000 prostitutes in its temple” – though that was the old Corinth, destroyed a few centuries before Paul’s writing. Nevertheless, the city had become synonymous with sexual immorality.³² It was home to the cult of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love.

The proliferation of sacred sex in Corinth, exacerbated by the ports on both sides of the isthmus, and a steady stream of international sailors has recently been called into question by scholars.³³ New Testament scholar Phillip Long charges that the real problem “was not that the city was sexually immoral, but that the church members were wealthy and powerful and behaved like wealthy and powerful [unredeemed] Romans.”³⁴ That’s interesting! The problems, he charges, “are not the result of living in a city full of sinners” but that of “Christians insisting on living as wealthy powerful members of the Roman world, not as humble servants...”³⁵ And that is the problem we have in America. It is not only the intensifying degrees of darkness in the culture, it is the lack of luminosity. The problem is with the church. It cannot be blamed solely on the culture.

There is no need to review the dysfunctions of the Corinthian church, they are multiple. Moving past the fixes Paul suggested in First Corinthians, we come to missional purpose in Second Corinthians. Rather than focusing on themselves, Paul urges an external focus, a missional posture, and the role of ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20) with the goal of reconciling men to God, through Christ. That refocusing of the church, away from it-

³² The NIV Study Bible, See: <https://bbhchurchconnection.wordpress.com/2015/01/09/how-immoral-was-corinth-really/>.

³³ John Lanci, “The Stones Don’t Speak, and the Texts Tell Lies: Sacred Sex at Corinth.” Pages 205-220 in Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen, eds. *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Harvard University Press, 2005.

³⁴ Phillip Long. See: <https://readingacts.com/2019/03/21/acts-18-corinth-as-sin-city/>.

³⁵ Ibid.

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self, even from its failures, breaks a stalemate. With a backward focus and a sense of defectiveness, the church was paralyzed. Paul, in this second letter, repositions them in a forward-looking stance. The change in them will come as they take responsibility for the city and its transformation, when they accept the role of ambassadors.

God's Arsenal: The Ambassador

They are incense, a reference to prayer, *"the sweet aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing"* (2 Corinthians 2:15). A fragrance changes the atmosphere. It attracts or repels. It is pleasant or putrid. It is difficult to stay neutral in the presence of pungent odor. This is not something one can conceal – we smell! Of heaven or the world, or worse yet, of hell itself.

The holy places of the tabernacle and subsequently the temple were saturated with the smell of incense burned twice daily, morning and evening. So, our prayer life, our time in the holy place, are times that frame our day. They should result in us carrying the fragrance of His presence, evidence of being in God's holy place. Not all to whom we go or to whom we are sent will be receptive. Some, Paul says, will be repelled by the odor. Our lives in the world are provocative, moving people, by our example and message, to a point of decision regarding Christ.

The Corinthians were also to be a letter – that's an ambassador function, that of a courier. But in this case, they do not carry a letter, they *are* the letter (2 Corinthians 3:2). So, what were they saying to Corinth, by the condition of their lives and the church? And what are we saying to the watching world? We never merely *have* the message; we *are* the message.

Our presence, our presentation, the one we represent should provoke action. We witness – which is both a judicial term

and function. While we do not judge, the Holy Spirit, by our witness – and His witness – brings men and women to a place before God in which a decision is necessary. It is a dividing moment. *“To the one, we are an odor of death and demise; to the other, a fragrance that brings life.”* We cannot and do not know the reaction of those to whom we are sent as ambassadors. *“And”* Paul muses, *“who is qualified for such a task?”* None of us. Only the Holy Spirit can accomplish this through us. Only the Holy Spirit, out of a spirit of prayer, can send us forth with the fragrance of Christ. We are not *“competent in ourselves to claim that anything comes from us, but our competence comes from God. He has qualified us as ministers of a new covenant...”* (2 Cor. 3:5-6). In Christ, Paul says, we are empowered to speak *“with sincerity, as men sent from God”* (2 Cor. 2:17). No pretense, no phoniness, no veneer – this is critical for an ambassador.

First, ambassadors are the fragrance of Christ. Second, they are letters from God to men. Sincere letters, laden with incense, the fragrance of caring prayer. Third and more profoundly, as ambassadors, we *carry the glory* of God. Not the weight of the world or some transient concern, though important. It is not a *solution* we carry to kings, but a *Savior*. We bear His glory. And His glory is the radiation of His holiness. *“Without holiness, no man shall see God,”* Hebrews 12:14 says, coupling that command with this – *“Follow peace with all men.”* Here is holiness and peace, *shalom*, peacemaking, reconciliation. Not holiness and contention, but holiness drenched in love. Men see God reflected in the state and condition of holiness in our lives, holiness wrapped in a gospel of reconciliation.

Moses reflected the glory of God so profoundly that his face was veiled – it was blinding. On the Mount of Transfiguration, *“Jesus’ appearance was transformed so that his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light”* (NLT). The Amplified Bible says, *“His appearance changed dramatically in their presence; and His face shone [with heavenly glory, clear and bright] like the sun...”*

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(Matthew 17:2). The glory of God, veiled by his human flesh, was breaking through, lighting up his face, making his clothing appear to glow. The Contemporary English Version says, *“in front of the disciples, Jesus was completely changed.”*

His face was shining like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. The ministry of Moses, in receiving the law, Paul called the ministry of death *“engraved in letters on stone, [that nevertheless] came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at the face of Moses...”* Then Paul concluded that the ministry of the Spirit should be even more glorious. Again, *“if the ministry of condemnation”* out of the law *“was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry of righteousness!”* There is no comparison! (2 Corinthians 3:7-8). We then, *“with unveiled faces all reflect the glory of the Lord.”* This is our call. Our work as ambassadors, notice, does not rise out of the law, but grace. It is the “ministry of righteousness” – and that, because of the “gift of righteousness,” the wonder of grace, not our works.

Even as we represent God to a lost world, we ourselves *“are being transformed into His image with intensifying glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”* – and this, out of prayer times. Back and forth we move, from times with the Lord, to times with the unredeemed, from times as a worshipper to times as a messenger, knowing, *“where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom,”* and hoping that God will liberate those to whom we appeal. *“Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away,”* and they see. They see Christ in us, and through us. They see God, their spiritual blindness being whisked away by a work of grace. We long, as ambassadors, to see that ‘Aha! moment’ in the person to whom we are sent. And we go with such hope in mind. It will not be our words or works, but the Spirit, speaking and working with us, present in the room.

God's Open Door: For a Season

God's redemptive work cannot end with us, it must extend through us to others. We must be a community that sends and empowers ambassadors, urging men, particularly community and national leaders, to respond to God's grace. We are, as the Church, an outpost of the kingdom of God in a nation, a city. We should long to see men, indeed, whole nations joined to the Lord while there is time. We should dream of and envision cities being impacted by revival and submersed in godly influences.

God has, in Christ, settled his love claim on humanity and shockingly offered amnesty to the race of men who spurned Him. In response, He wrapped Himself in flesh and came to the earth, walking among us, teaching, preaching, healing, caring – only to be rejected again. His claim as king was denied – though that was the sign under which he was crucified (John 19:19). His messianic role was denied (1 Peter 2:7; Psalm 118:22; John 10:22-42). Shockingly, the offer of amnesty remains, even in the face of a culture that denies creation, the resurrection, kingship of Christ, and even the very existence of God.

Jesus was wrongly tried and crucified – we, humanity, Jew and Gentile, secular and religious, the powerful and pauper, executed God, revealed in Jesus. And His response was love – an offer of forgiveness and reconciliation. Unbelievable. This is not an offer that ends in cool co-existence with God, but in sonship, in adoption, in our being crowned with glory. If this no longer shocks you and I, we are inadequate as ambassadors.

God, in Christ, his life and crucifixion, has settled the question of His nature and His love. This is the offer we make as ambassadors. We cannot force men to love God or accept His love. He alone can empower such love, by grace. He will not force the conversion, but He will aid it, again, by grace. God has opened that door on heaven's side, but each man must also open that door from his side. Jesus stands at the door of the

church, and by implication, of every man and woman on the planet, knocking (Revelation 3:20). “If any man opens,” anyone, any man or woman, can respond, by grace.

For a season, the bar remains incredibly low. Any person opening the door to God, responding to His love, is met by an affirmation of grace. God seizes the moment and enters, *eisercbomai*. He goes into, comes into. He is in and among us – these are the meanings of the term. This describes a heightened sense of the presence of Christ. The meaning is both *unto* and *into*. His entering has a purpose. He wants “to dine with us,” *deipneó*, “to have a meal with us.” The peace or fellowship offering of the Old Testament is obviously in view.³⁶ And that offering was the climatic offering of

³⁶ In Leviticus 1-5, we have the five basic sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament. These are not irrelevant. The book of Romans is loosely built on these offerings. In Leviticus 1, we have the consecration offering. In Leviticus 2, we have the grain or meal offering. Older translations call it the ‘meat’ offering, which is confusing. This is the fruit of the harvest field, of one’s labor and service, given to God as an offering. Then, in Leviticus 3, there is the peace or fellowship offering. This is the only offering in which the offeror got back a portion of the sacrifice. This was an edible sacrifice. In fact, an offeror could invite others to join him in what was essentially, ‘dinner with God.’ This shared meal with God was evidence of reconciliation. We are at the Father’s table, a part of His family. These offerings – the burnt offering (Leviticus 1, for consecration), the grain offering (Leviticus 2, symbolizing service) and the peace offering (Leviticus 3, celebrating reconciliation) are offerings of *consecration*. They advance the life of the believer. In Leviticus 4, we have the sin offering, given to demonstrate repentance and remorse over behavior that was offensive to God, a violation of His law. This sacrifice was completely wasted – carried out of the camp, to symbolize how sin is a life-waster. The sin offering aims to repair the damage in one’s *relationship with God*. In Leviticus 5, we have the trespass offering. At times, our sin affects others – it is not only offensive to God but also destructive to us, and to the lives of others. When sin has a detrimental effect on our neighbor, the trespass offering is demanded along with restitution. The end of that offering is not only forgiveness but reconciliation. These offerings, in Leviticus 4-5 are offerings of *reparation* – seeking to repair the damage caused by sin to the relationship with God and others. The actual practiced order in the Old Testament is different than the order of Leviticus 1-5. In actuality, the offerings of *reparation* come first – sin and trespass. Once we have demonstrated repentance and restitution, we move to *consecration*. The burnt offering is the gift of self to God – whole life consecration. That means all our talents and abilities are dedicated to Him and His kingdom – and that is the grain offering, the offering that takes us into the harvest

all sacrifices (Leviticus 3:1-5). That offering presupposed the sin offering (Romans 2-8) as well as the trespass offering (Romans 9-11, details the trespass of Israel). It presupposed consecration, the burnt offering (Romans 12:1-2), and service (12:3-8, spiritual gifts). Now full reconciliation was the order of the moment. Now, the sinner, is having dinner with God. The altar, that demanded the death of sin and self, has now become a table.

Consecration was and is the foundation of the peace offering, and loving service (the meal/grain offering) is its fruit, but fellowship, peace was its reward, its zenith. Dinner with God. The altar, the slaughter place (*mizbeach*, altar), had become a table. One could share portions of the peace offering with others. Reconciliation was being celebrated both with God and others. Out of such a celebration, and toward such a moment, the ministry of the ambassador is oriented. *"I will make him to share in my most intimate and blissful contact"* (Revelation 3:20).

There is a stunning picture at the end of the letters of Jesus to the churches of Asia. He was locked out of his own church. Indeed, he is now exiled from the earth. The power to offer the invitation for him to return, to enter – a heart, a life, a family, a church, a city or a nation - is in our hands. Our mission, as ambassadors, is to awaken men, particularly leaders, those with influence, to respond to that offer while there is still time.

Now, the threshold is so low that anyone, man or woman, boy or girl, can open the door to Christ and his love. And he will come in, and sit down, breaking bread, making peace, transforming us from sinner to saint, from outsider to insider. We beseech men to respond to this offer. We must work, because night is coming (John 9:4). This door, now open on God's side (Revelation 3:8), will not always be open so wide.

field, and helps us return with sheaves. The end, the high point, is the peace offering, a celebration of unity with God, of reconciliation and fellowship. Now, having peace with God, we can be effective peacemakers.

Review:

1. Discuss this sentence, “What might have provoked a war between God, His kingdom, and the kingdoms of this world, has instead become the occasion for an offer of peace, a truce.” What are the implications? How has the cross – the attack of humanity on God, in Christ, turned out to be the place of peace, reconciliation and healing?
2. God has two claims on the earth – Creation and Redemption. Both are denied. One, by the supposition of evolution and the other by the denial of the resurrection. Will either prevent the claim of Christ on the earth at his return?
3. The world demands our silence – in the UK, an arrest was made for ‘thinking’ a prayer. God, on the other hand, demands that we witness, that we proclaim good news. For six decades, we have obeyed the culture. Where has that gotten us? What will we do now?
4. The word for ambassador is the same, in Greek, as the term for elder. Does this imply maturity for the role of the ambassador? Is the idea of ‘statesman’ a good way to see the term?
5. The ambassador is to *parakaleo* – to call for, to exhort, to encourage. This is the foundational function, out of the office of priest. Agree? Does the church encourage the mayor? Your church? Do you?
6. The ultimate goal is reconciliation. Talk about it.
7. The arsenal of the ambassador is the transformation of their lives by the Holy Spirit – the way they smell (fragrance), what they say (they are a letter from God), how they look – they shine (they carry the glory of God). “Who is sufficient for this?” Paul asks. Are you? What qualifies us? Prepares us?

PART 9

The Hard Heart Of Kings And The Finger of God

Overview:

Pharaoh must have asked, “Who was Moses?” – a spokesman for a group of slaves? And why then, should he meet with such a man? Some king, some mayor, may ask the same of you. Remember, you are not there for yourself or by yourself. You are an ambassador representing the church, the embassy of the invisible kingdom of God.

Egypt and Pharaoh came to see ‘the finger of God’ at work around the visits of Moses. You must learn to discern, to see, and interpret this ‘finger of God’ dancing around your ambassador work.

You may find the hearts of kings hardened by their intoxication of power and overconfidence. They may, like Pharaoh, ask for prayer. But that is not always an indication of any true change in their actions. In discerning the response of a leader, you have to be both wise and gracious.

You always want to keep the high water mark of the beatitudes in mind, “Blessed are the peacemakers!” Be a peacemaker! The next movement in the beatitudes is “Blessed are they who are persecuted!” Don’t anticipate that our peacemaking efforts will always tenderize the hearts of adversaries. The answer to our peacemaking endeavors

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may still result in persecution. Still, we are called to be peacemakers. The role of the ambassador is a sacred calling. You will find in this chapter, twenty statements about this role.

The ambassador is an agent of life – that is the final appeal. Review the function of the ambassador at the end of the chapter.

The Ambassador and the Finger of God

Pharaoh wanted no recurring encounter with Moses. Who was Moses? A mere shepherd? From a group of slaves? And he, the most powerful man on the planet, should meet with this Hebrew? It may be difficult to secure an appointment with those in political office or high-profile national, or even local leaders. But the Hebrew prophet, Moses, was tasked by God to represent his people in requesting a peaceful exodus from Egypt and the liberty from the status of slavery.

His continued access to Pharaoh was only possible due to “*the finger of God*” (Exodus 8:19; Luke 11:20). The finger of God was supernatural and inexplicable. Its acts could not be duplicated, even by magical means. It was evidence of the work of Yahweh, the God Moses represented. Again, “*We are witnesses and so also is the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 5:32). Prayer must both precede our witness and follow it. Human interchanges with a king will not change his heart or mind. Only the work of God can accomplish such a change. In Exodus, around the ambassador role of Moses, God acted, going to war on behalf of His people and purposes, against the gods of Egypt, showing Himself alive and glorious.³⁷

Miracle after miracle worked to soften the hard heart of Pha-

³⁷ Every plague can be related to one or more Egyptian deities who were powerless to act, even to save themselves. They were helpless before Yahweh and Moses, His representative.

raoh. At times, he appeared to break. He asked Moses to pray – but only for the abatement of the plagues, “*Pray to the Lord,*” (Exodus 8:8). And Moses did and the plague abated. Then Pharaoh requested, sincerely or disingenuously, “*Pray for me.*” He summoned Moses and Aaron, saying, “*I have sinned against your God... overlook my sin ... Pray to your God to get me out of this*” (Exodus 8:9; 10:16). Moses prayed for Pharaoh, but his frantic desire for prayer was not an indication of profound change. He did not want change; he only wanted his problem solved. In Exodus 12:32, he asks Moses to pray for a blessing on his life. Again, without true change.

The ambassador cannot be duped by convenient and superficial requests for prayer and convenient declarations of repentance, which are only manipulative ploys. Those who trade in power struggle with true humility, and that is the only gateway to conversion. The prophets served in the role of ambassador, though their function was often more confrontational. They were thrust into kingly encounters when all options had failed, and God had determined to act, often in a way that was detrimental to the nation that had sinned.³⁸ About 250 kings are mentioned in the Old Testament – and God, at times, had messages for such kings.³⁹ And in our times, he has such messages again for rulers.

The Ambassador: The Final Offer

Before he breaks the nations and its kings “*with an iron rod*” and “*shatters them in pieces like a clay pot*” (Revelation 2:27; Jeremiah 51:20), we are called to be ambassadors, working as peacemakers, offering amnesty. “*Listen to this warning, you kings; learn this*

³⁸ The Talmud notes 48 prophets in the Old Testament, and 7 prophetesses. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophets_in_Judaism#:~:text=Rabbinic%20tradition-,According%20to%20the%20Talmud%2C%20there%20were%2048%20prophets%20and,prophetesses%20who%20prophe-sied%20to%20Israel.

³⁹ See: <https://www.christianwebsite.com/how-many-kings-in-the-bible/>.

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lesson, you rulers of the world: Serve the LORD with fear; tremble and bow down to him" (Psalm 2:10-11). Now, there is an offer of voluntary reverence, from the posture of a self-restrained God. But his mercy is not to be confused with weakness. The offer of amnesty is not endless. Evil must be dealt with. Sin must be banished. The rebellion must be quenched. The devil and his angels, and those who have chosen to go to war against heaven with the dragon, will be eventually vanquished. They will "*suddenly die.*" In contrast, we are told, "*Happy are all who go to him for protection*" (Psalm 2:12).

MacLaren reminds us, "there can be nothing worse, darker," than our resistance to grace. In such a moment, we demonstrate a nature that is both averse and indifferent to the highest good, all while God is pleading. We dare not, in such a moment, make our heart like steel and deafen our ear. Resistance is the greater sin; the secret disposition of our heart being revealed. In America, we have heard the voice so often that we no longer see the invitation as rare. Three and a half billion people on the planet have yet to hear. Twenty-one million of these Unreached Peoples live in the United States.

We have developed an eschatology of withdrawal, an other-worldly mentality that has given up on this world. I see no such permission in scripture for us to cease to be penetrating light in the darkness, and salt to a decaying culture. The metaphor of light is more clearly understood – it is our outspoken, piercing, words and actions. The light confronts the darkness and stands in stark contrast to it. The salt is more subtle, quietly working. It is more integrated for effectiveness, working from the inside-out. Perhaps this is best understood as implying the salt covenant – dialogues with those on the opposite side of the moral and ideological spectrum. Our table-talk conversations have the goal of influencing such people toward righteousness.

The Ambassador: The Opposite Spirit

In either case, both salt and light, the ambassador role is implied. Jesus, in his most well-known sermon, in Matthew 5-7, pronounced the means by which the ‘blessing’ of God, the lost blessing, lost in the fall (Genesis 1:28), might be restored. He goes through a series of heart attitudes and behavioral postures that invite God’s blessing – poor in spirit, the broken who mourn, meekness or gentleness, those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart. All of these are conditions or dispositions, and they are prerequisites for a successful ambassador ministry. That is implied in the 7th blessing.

Jesus noted another means of blessing, an action, a role, “*Blessed are the peacemakers.*” This is the ambassador. Everything before has qualified the *blessed* to now *be a blessing* – and give the gift, the offer of peace, of amnesty to a world separated from God. The process does not stop with our spiritual poverty without God, nor yet our hunger and thirst for righteousness. It is not our capacity for empathy, our tears and our mercy, coupled with gentleness, that is our goal. No, all those characteristics make a great ambassador – a peacemaker. This is our role, to be transformed agents of reconciliation.

However, our joy in this role, in a world hostile to God and the gospel, may be at times short-lived. We are likely to be met with the disposition of those who see themselves as entitled and feel no sense of obligation to God as either Creator or Redeemer. The world is twice His. First, by design, which is by His creative agency, and again, by redemption. God came to the earth, wrapped in flesh, offering Himself to us – and we crucified Him. Rather than accept the demands for righteousness being made on us, we, in the action of Pilate, sought to wash our hands and absolve ourselves of guilt without success. We, in the action of the Caiphas and Annas, high priests, rejected Christ as Messiah. Both political and religious entities

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are guilty of rejecting God, in Christ. And both continue to resist and reject God. Still, there is a disposition of grace, an offer of immunity – and we, the church, a time-space expression of the kingdom of God, are ambassadors of His invisible kingdom and this offer of grace.

An ambassador represents a foreign nation, a kingdom. Our overemphasis on the church has eclipsed our view of the kingdom – it is rarely mentioned. Yet, it is the dominant theme of Jesus. He rarely mentioned the church. We, in contrast, rarely mention the kingdom. Hard hearts or not, it is time for us to take the gospel of the kingdom to kings, and those in authority, the leaders of nations, the heads of corporations.

The Ambassador: The Disposition of the Father

Let's call to mind the story of Jesus (Luke 15:11-32) regarding the father of the prodigal son, who had every reason to berate the son upon his return, to place him on probation, to treat him in a distant and hostile way, to force him to prove his worthiness to again be trusted as a son. All that was cast aside. The father in the story was always watchful, looking, hoping that his alienated son would return. He did not lose hope. Seeing him, he ran to him, embracing him, accepting him, kissing him – holding him. And doing so, as he was. Shoeless. In rags. Filthy. Destitute. Shamelessly reduced to poverty.

The action, the irresponsibility and wastefulness of the rebellious and independent prodigal are not nearly as shocking as the unconditional response of the father upon his return. It is the love of the Father in view of humanity's sin that no longer shocks us. We assume God's love, that He is, that He will be, that He must be – loving. But that is not true of the gods of any other religion. This God, so fully revealed in the New Testament, in Christ, crucified by us and for us, sets the God of the Bible in a class all by Himself. And by extension, it calls me,

and you, as ambassadors, to be as odd as He is – to be loving, and gracious, and forgiving, merciful and embracing, offering reconciliation to our enemies.

It is a mystery that we should “run to the roar.” That only in the presence of the God whose holiness is a threat to us, due to our sin, do we find life and peace. His anger is poised toward sin; and because we cling to sin, we continue in it, we endanger our own souls. We are in the middle of a cosmic hostage situation. Sin has allowed us to be taken captive. Satan has become its agent, refusing to let us go. A holy God must, for our sake and the sake of the world that He created, deal with the toxic and aggressive, the deadly cancer of sin – and its effects. We are both the victims and the enabler of our captor. God’s anger is not first and primarily against us, but on our behalf. We too must learn to hate sin – and want to be free.

The Ambassador: A Sacred Calling

Let’s review the sacred call of the ambassador by noting a few highlights.

1. Universally, the office of an ambassador is sacred. His “person is regarded as inviolable.”⁴⁰
2. He is not a rogue agent, acting or speaking independently. He is bound to obey the instructions of the sovereign he represents, and the sending agency of that Sovereign – the Church.
3. We are ambassadors for Christ, sent to do what he would do and say what he would say.
4. We reveal to kings and those in influence, indeed, to all men, “the terms on which God is willing to be reconciled.”⁴¹
5. Outside those perimeters, we have no room to negotiate different terms.

⁴⁰ See: <https://www.christianwebsite.com/how-many-kings-in-the-bible/>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

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6. We do this in *a diplomatic, honorable and dignified manner*.
7. It is important to see that the role of *the ambassador is evangelistic at its heart*, appealing to God's goodness and offering a good news message, but it is more than that.
8. The ambassador stands *at the seam between a nation or nations and God*. He stands between kings and the King of kings.
9. The ambassador represents the Kingdom of God to kings, and those in authority, those with influence, *to the end that a bridge of understanding is established*, a bridge on which truth can be delivered. A bridge with the end goal of peace and reconciliation with God.
10. He works with *the grand goal of nations being joined to the Lord*.
11. No ambassador for God can promote themselves or advance their own wealth or seek their own honor. *All honor is to be given to the one they represent – the Son of God*. As noted earlier, we, as ambassadors stand “in Christ's stead,” *huper Christou*, literally, “in the place of Christ; doing what he did when on earth, and what he would do were he where we are.”⁴²
12. It may seem a strange requirement, but *an ambassador must be a citizen of the nation they represent*. An alien cannot represent the throne or the Sovereign of a foreign nation – they may do representative work, and be deputized to do so, but true ambassadors are not at home in the nation to which they are assigned. Paul says, in 2 Corinthians 5:16, that we, the ambassador, must “*regard no one from a worldly point of view*.” We have a heavenly perspective.
13. Ambassadors are “*in Christ*,” a new creature, a part of the coming new creation, a new order. Reconciled, we are a bridge of love and hope, truth and grace, from God who wants to “*reconcile the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them*.” What a staggering concept.

⁴² See: <https://www.christianwebsite.com/how-many-kings-in-the-bible/>.

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14. Such an ambassador is *exemplary, without reproach*.
15. *The character of the ambassador is representative of Christ himself.* His ethics demand that he be selfless, not pursuing his own interests, never exploiting, not seizing the opportunities due to insider information. Every word, every deed, even small nuances, is interpreted as indicators of unexpressed pleasure or disdain.
16. The ambassador, then, is one who *exhibits extraordinary poise*. He is in constant contact with the throne, the government he represents. He “prays without ceasing.”
17. The great contribution of an ambassador is in troubled times. In such times, when war may be imminent, the importance of *his calm and non-reactive role, his capacity to be steadfast, is paramount*. Paul was imprisoned in his capacity in representing God, but even then, he was unflinching in his resolve. When the guard in Phillippi would have perished had Paul chosen the occasion of an earthquake to do the reasonable thing, and flee, he chose rather to impose discipline on himself and the others, lest their escape cost the guard his life.
18. *Diplomacy is the art of the ambassador. Wisdom is the well from which he draws.*
19. The ambassador also *knows the language and culture of the crown and people to whom he is sent*. The guard in Jerusalem was astonished when Paul spoke Greek, “As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, ‘May I say something to you?’ ‘Do you speak Greek?’ he replied. ‘Aren’t you the Egyptian...’” (Acts 21:37). Paul spoke Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. He was linguistically diverse, culturally broad, conversant in the worlds of the rich and powerful and the poor and ordinary, the Jew, the Greek and the Roman.
20. The ambassador *lives between the love of God and the lostness of humanity*. Between what is and what could be. Between the problem of sin and the promises of God. He him-

self wants to be faithful to the God who has called him, knowing he will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. He also wants to prevent men from standing before the Great White Throne in a condition of lostness.

The Ambassador: Knowledge, Understanding and Wisdom

Three things often converge in the book of Proverbs - *knowledge*, what I know; *wisdom*, artful insight that informs methods; and *understanding*, the how of a matter.

Knowledge answers *what* questions – facts. Understanding answers *how* questions – this is the tactical, the application, the interface of facts. Wisdom answers *why* questions – and those are the most difficult and the most important. They go to character and motive, to underlying assumptions. To the moral and spiritual underpinnings of life itself.

Wisdom is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit, referred to as ‘she’ in Wisdom Literature. She is a tutor, an instructor, a trainer and a coach. We play the game of life needing wisdom, the whispering voice of the Spirit. God’s voice.

Without accurate knowledge, we fail the truth test. Without empathetic understanding, we fail the love and mercy test. But our deficit in wisdom is more difficult to explain. Wisdom is evidence of the Spirit’s work in which insight comes, at times, on the spot, both in the moment and for the moment. It cannot always be transposed to another situation. It is *kairos* sensitive, and context specific. It is, at times, a word of knowledge – something we know, that we know only in the moment, and only by the Spirit. It is, at times, a word of wisdom – an insight, a solution, a piece of the puzzle that solves it, a gift of the Spirit in the moment. It may be a prophetic word, one of comfort, edification or exhortation (1 Corinthians 14:1-2). It may be heightened discernment, the ability to see through spiritual smog, to clearly distinguish in a matter, to parse the difference

between flesh and spirit, the natural and the supernatural, a human issue or demonic interference. Or yet, to discern the mood of the Holy Spirit and God's immediate concerns.

The ambassador should be *knowledgeable* – ignorant ambassadors cause wars and destroy bridges between kingdoms. The ambassador should be *understanding*, knowing the 'how' of a matter, cultural nuances, protocol, the ins and outs of critical matters. But what the ambassador needs more than often is *wisdom*. In our times there is an abundance of the 'what,' less of the 'how,' and virtually none of the 'why.' There is a famine of wisdom and a shortage of wise, seasoned counselors.

All these, knowledge, understanding and wisdom, are linked to character. And they are a platform for the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The ambassador of heaven, of God, cannot depend merely on the natural, but on the supernatural. He is no spiritual showman. He is, as David DuPlessis would often say, "supernaturally natural, and naturally supernatural." Jesus was so common that he had to be picked out of a crowd, and so supernatural, that when spoke, the soldiers that had come to take him fell backward (John 18:6).

The Ambassador: Agents of Life

Christianity is not merely a set of ethical behaviors or moral principles, or religious exercises or even theological concepts. Those are elements of religion. What makes Christianity unique is Christ. Christianity is the life of Christ – not merely his exemplary pattern, but his very life – given to us, released into and through us, Christ in us – the hope of glory. It is this relationship with the living, resurrected Lord that sets Christianity apart. Indeed, that sets Christ apart.

Paul writes to the Thessalonian Church and says, "*Faithful is he who has called you, who also will do it*" (I Thessalonians 5:24). This makes Christianity different from any other faith, and from

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much of what we think Christianity is supposed to be. Christ calls – He is still alive, and he engages men and women. That is the more important side of prayer. Not what we say to God, but what God might say to us. God, in Christ, with the voice of the Spirit is calling. He is speaking – to you and me. And He wants us to respond, freely. To hear. And to say “Yes” to His call. Saying “Yes,” means yielding, surrendering. Saying “Yes,” means dying – to self, and to our effort. Saying “Yes,” means letting Him do, in us and through us, what He has proclaimed. He not only calls; He does the doing.

This is true Christianity, Christ in us, through us, touching through our touching, loving through our loving, caring through our caring, speaking through our speaking. Christ in us, the hope of glory. *“It is God,”* Paul says to the Philippians, *“who is working in you both to will and do of His own good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:13). We have so watered Christianity down, that it is now soul salvation, from hell, all relevant to the future, only demanding that we live relatively moral and decent lives. Such a view misses the radical nature of our conversion. *“We were enemies,”* Paul charges. Most people responding to an altar invitation see themselves as good, decent people who want to be a bit closer to God, more spiritual, more assured of their eternal destiny. Few see the cancerous, poisonous and toxic nature of their sin in contrast to the holiness of God. Few see that the least of their sin was an affront to God, a high crime against His holy nature, an act of treason toward the kingdom of God.

Accepting the offer of amnesty, *“We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”* Salvation is no cheap thing. In the fray between us, our sin, and God’s holy wrath, His son caught friendly fire. On the earth, in the middle of the fray, false charges were leveled against him. He took the bullet. He stepped into the line of fire. God could only save one – His only begotten, and in the process, let go of humanity. Or he could release His Son to death and open the door for spiritual orphans like you

and me, and offer us redemption, regeneration and the right of adoption. He knew, without Him, we had no chance. We would perish. And He knew that Jesus, had no sin charged to him. Therefore, he would pass through the veil of death and into the grave, anguished by it, as any human would be by a crucifixion. But he would triumph over hell. Death, by sin, had no claim on his life. There were not grounds on which hell could hold him. He emerged victoriously with the trophies of those who had died under the terms of the Old Testament covenant (Eph. 4:8; Psalm 68:18; Mt. 27:52-53).

By the cross, *"We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son!"* But there is more. We dare not stop there. *"Much more, we shall be saved by his life."* Reconciliation is by his *death* on the cross. Salvation is anchored to his *resurrection* from the dead. His ultimate triumph, along with our authority as believers, is assured by his acceptance and enthronement in heaven where he is seated on David's throne.

Our work as ambassadors is the ministry of reconciliation (the cross), and the evidence of the life of Christ in us (the resurrection), along with the authority of his kingship (enthronement). It is the gift of that life that we offer – to a mayor, to the city, to the down and out, and the up and out, in the spirit of the cross, knowing all the while that we are kingly priests. It is the offering of reconciliation. It is stately, authoritative, but gracious.

Peter says Christ *"bare our sins in his own body on the tree"* (1 Peter 2:24), *"suffering, the just for the unjust."* Note the term - 'tree'. That is interesting language that Peter uses. The normal Greek word for cross is *stauros* or stake used 27 times in the New Testament. The word tree, as we picture it organically, with branches, is *dendra*, occurring 25 times. The word Peter uses here is translated tree, but technically, it refers to the wood of a tree – not a live, rooted tree, as one might picture in a lynching. Christ was crucified, not lynched, yet Peter does not use the term the Romans might have used, a stake or a crucible. He

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uses the term *zulon*, wood, identifying the cross with a tree.

Christ died on the wood of a tree. Adam might have died for his sin at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God declaring, “...*in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.*” He didn’t. He lived, only because in that moment, God committed to die on the tree. That terrible tree is timeless. All of us have stood there pulling fruit from its branches, listening to the whispering of the serpent, the fallen *seraph*. Now, one has died at the tree, as God had warned, and yet, he has risen from the pool of his own blood.

He lives – and he offers to us entrance into an open garden of prayer, once closed, and to the fruit Adam and Eve never tasted. Fruit from the tree of life. We are ‘redeemed, reconciled *by his death*’ in our stead, but we are *saved, given life*, out of the abundance of his resurrection life. Salvation is not merely a judicial act – though it is certainly that. *It is an impartation of life.* Are you forgiven? Wonderful. Have you tasted redemptive grace on the back of true repentance of sin? Excellent. Do you have life, new life, abundant life, resurrection life surging inside of you? That’s glory. Now, do you know the authority granted you by his enthronement?

Mental assent regarding the issue of sin and the significance of Christ’s death is not adequate. Repentance is imperative, but renunciation is negative, it defines your relationship from a thing, from sin, from its deadly consequences. Moral recalibration and consecration are fruits, but both are inadequate. Christianity is certainly a new way to live. But it is more; it is life itself. It is the life of the new way. You cannot live this life by yourself, of yourself. Only Christ can live his life – in you, and through you.

And only such life can qualify you to be an ambassador of Christ.

The Ambassador: The Function

1. Ambassadors do not go, they are sent.
2. Ambassadors stand between – one kingdom and another.
3. Ambassadors do not speak for themselves, but for the one who has sent them.
4. Ambassadors deliver the message, with clarity, and seek clarity on any response, and receive any given response with grace. “Do I understand you to mean...?” “May I say thus-and-so on your behalf?” “Thank you for seeing me, I will relay your greeting/message.” “I know those who sent me desire the best for you ... and the city/county/state/the nation.”
5. Ambassadors bless – they do not curse. That is a function of the prophet – and it is, if ever, an alien function. Our call is to bless, to open the door of grace in the face of God’s coming wrath.
6. Ambassadors build bridges. Their role is reconciliation - peace. Their currency is love and grace. Where others draw lines, they draw circles.
7. Ambassadors seek to find some common link, some place in a relationship that might otherwise be hostile, for a bond to form.
8. Ambassadors seek to trade in the currency of trust – and that demands truth. When truth is adverse, it is nevertheless offered, wrapped in love and kindness. “Yes, our philosophical positions appear irreconcilable, but you know that our highest value is unconditional love, even in the face of such differences. We are sent to bring peace, not conflict. And to that end, I hope we can find some common ground. Those we represent want to serve, as we have done in the past.”

Review:

1. Who was Moses, Pharaoh must have asked himself, a slave, and he is to meet with him? And some king, some mayor, may ask the same of you. What will your response be?
2. Talk about 'the finger of God'.
3. The hearts of kings are often hardened by the intoxication of power, overconfidence – and when they, like Pharaoh, ask for prayer, it is not always an indication of true change in action. How do you discern the response of a leader – and be both wise and gracious?
4. Keep the high water mark of the beatitudes in mind, "Blessed are the peacemakers!" Be a peacemaker!
5. The role of the ambassador is a sacred calling – review the twenty statements.
6. Talk about the ambassador as an agent of life – the final appeal.
7. Review the function of the ambassador.

PART 10

Blessing And Power

Overview:

The ambassador must be flexible. The role changes, it flexes and evolves. And yet, it is rooted in timeless, Biblical principles. There is a definitive relationship between blessing and dominion, and between blessing and prayer. You will see in this chapter how these relate.

God created man and placed him in a garden. He did that with the globe in mind. We must ask, what garden has God placed us in? There is, in every garden wall, a hidden door that opens to the globe. If you keep your garden, you gain access to the globe. If you lose the garden, you lose the globe.

Placed in a garden, in some geographic assignment by God, we are to grow and guard our garden. To guard is to watch – shamar, and that term is related to prayer.

God has persistently pursued man – to bless humanity, in Adam, in Noah, through Abram, through the house of David, through Christs, and now through the church. But, we, as did our historical forebears, are missing our assignment. We are failing to bless and be a blessing.

In this role, are we ‘waking up God consciousness?’

Here is the bottom line. We are at the intersection of power and dominion, and of the man or woman who sits on a sacred chair endowed with some measure of authority, small or great. That chair, whatever the nature of the authority, is sacred. But the individual in it may not see it as so. In that case, they may corrupt the chair, they may abuse their authority. They may bend it toward themselves for personal gain. They may wield it in a manner that is inordinate; that is damaging. Even if the power is used by corrupt individuals, in its intent, it is pure. The goal of the ambassador of Christ is to work to heal the incongruence between the king and the throne/seat of authority – morally or spiritually, relationally or ethically.

The ambassador represents God – from whom all authority flows. It is His chair that is occupied by a board member and leader, the corporate president or a national influencer. When the ambassador cannot bless the lifestyle or the moral temperament of the individual in the chair, they bless the chair, the seat of authority. They reclaim, by prayer, on behalf of God, that seat of authority. They ask for God's intervention, the God who raises up and takes down kings (Dan. 2:21).

Ambassadors speak peace. They invoke God's name. They invite God's presence. They hopefully awaken the king to that presence.

The Evolving Role of the Ambassador

Earlier, we talked about ministry gifts (Ephesians 4), and the ambassador. And we also looked at the ambassador as a priest, then a prophet. Let's review these modes. Our order here is a bit different than the earlier presentation. But remember, this is dynamic, and what we are offering is for illustrative purposes. It isn't rote or legalistic.

First the ambassador is a *peacemaker* – a priest. A bridge builder. The ambassador's goal here is reconciliation, the convey-

ance of God's blessing. Second, the ambassador is an *evangelist*. Here, the goal is to help the person in power be reconciled with God. That is only possible as they make peace with God. Third, the ambassador is a *teacher*. They are educating, filling in the blanks, answering questions about God, the Bible, faith, and what a godly king or leader is. This was one of the dominant roles of the clergy in Colonial America. They helped the Founders understand the relationship between the sacred and the civil, between godly leaders who governed by godly principles, yet, did so distinct from the church. The fourth mode is the ambassador-*prophet*. Here, the ambassador carries a message of correction, possibly judgment. This is the last straw. It is after the earlier modes have been employed, and a bridge of love and hope have been established by a non-adversarial relationship.

We lead with love. We function as priests, blessing, showing God's love, His desire to bless. We advance the idea of God's claim on the individual in a position of power or influence, as Paul did with Fetus and Agrippa. We pray, inviting the Holy Spirit to work. We point out God's desire to bless. We teach and educate, answering questions about faith and values. Conviction comes and God knocks on the door of a heart. Such a moment can be lost. God's grace can be spurned. Rulers, like Pharaoh, can harden their heart and simultaneously, makes the bricks heavier. God may then send His ambassador as a prophet, and at times, national calamity follows. This is never God's desire.

The ambassador, at times, interprets God's actions, national disasters and tragedies, to the powers. At other times, he warns of impending misfortunes due to the king's actions or national sins. The ambassador is only a messenger. He speaks what God whispers to him. At times, he may move back to the mode of ambassador-evangelist, appealing to the individual to 'be reconciled with God.' And then, back to bridge-building. Each mode is dependent on the leading and work of the Spirit.

The Connection Between Blessing and Dominion

In the Genesis narrative, God speaks first, and what He says is even more compelling than the fact that He initiates the conversation with Adam and Eve. *“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground’”* (Genesis 1:28). Here, in the opening chapter of the Bible, blessing and dominion are tied together, and their source is God.

Effective dominion is impossible without God’s blessing. Notice how this blessing unfolds. It does so in five stages – fruitfulness, multiplication, strategic distribution and positioning, stewardship or management, and finally, governance (Gen. 1:28). Backwards, governance is effective stewardship and management, which demands strategic positioning, effective representation. And that demands staffing, by the multiplication of blessed personnel. And that rises out of fruitfulness. This is a micro plan for effective governance.

The fifth term, have ‘dominion’ is *radab*. It means to rule, to subdue. It can mean to tread down, to put a thing under one’s feet, to subjugate. But such militance is not the heart of the term. *Radab* is not about exploitation, but about care. It is about the maintenance of order and justice. It generally means to be empowered in order to govern effectively. It involves governance, not only over populations but over creation as well. Thus, it is not a matter of conquest as much as it is about stewardship from an empowered position. The term is tied in ancient Near Eastern culture, to kingship. A king was a steward acting for God. He was the true king, the power behind the power. Dominion then is a gift.

The Amplified Bible says, *“God blessed them [granting them certain authority] and said to them, ‘Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, and subjugate it [putting it under your power]; and rule over (dominate)’”* –

over fish and birds, and every living thing that moves. Over things that fly, swim and crawl. Over things that are fixed and things that move. The dominion, the call to stewardship is stunning. Breathtaking.

Blessing – An Action out of Prayer

We need to add one more piece. The term *bless* is the Hebrew, *barak*, which means knee. It is the idea of humility, inferring prayer. It pictures Adam and Eve on their knees before God, being blessed. To pray is to put oneself in the position that begs the blessing of God. Prayer is the posture, the attitude, the disposition that God blesses. And that blessing empowers. It is then impossible to govern without prayer. Without humility. You rise from a posture of weakness and your strength is found in God.

It is to this attitude of dependence on God, and reliance on His blessing, to which ambassadors call those in power. The second movement in Genesis is tied to God's second major speech in Genesis 2:15-16. There, God set boundaries. "*You may eat freely from every tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die.*" Adam and Eve violated the boundaries and forfeited the blessing.

Every sovereign (ruler or leader) sits in Adam's seat, but leaders do so having risen from their knees, from humble prayer. The position of representative authority and dominion, of governance or stewardship is inherently blessed by God. It is given as power to make people fruitful, and steward resources in an orderly and productive manner. Adam is told that he has the responsibility of both growing and guarding the garden. He must cultivate it and defend it. And so it is with everyone in a position of authority.

The Garden – Growing it and Guarding it

In order to accomplish this, God *put, yanach*, man, in the garden. The term means he gave, put him in a place to rest. Eden was paradise, but in it was a garden where one could walk with God. The term also means to “take leave,” to take a break, and “settle down.” It can also mean a “deposit,” and further, “to be allowed to stay,” for example, in the garden, in God’s presence. Adam was “deposited” in the garden. There he walked with God, settled down and rested. Being allowed to stay, however, was contingent on his growing and guarding the garden. In Genesis 1, he was *blessed*, but in Genesis 2, God gave him *boundaries* into which he had to “settle,” and “rest.” The idea of resting or settling means not only physical rest, relief from labor, but actually laying down. Beyond that, it is the idea of peace, of being at peace.

It implies a rhythm, established in God’s rhythm of creation and rest. Rest was possible because of God’s grace, His gift of provision. This is the idea of consecration and dedication. God created, then rested. But man was created at the end of the 6th day, the 7th, the Sabbath, was a day of rest, being his first full day. His rhythm was not work-rest; but work out of rest – rest-then-work. He was not to rest *from* work, or after work, or from a place of weariness. But to work *out of* rest, out of a rested state. Adam’s rest was rooted in God’s provision and sovereignty.

The first role of Adam was to tend or *grow* the garden, *abad*. It involved work and service, labor, and even worship. Thus, labor becomes an act of worship. It proceeds from worship. One of the five sacrifices of the Old Testament was the meal or grain offering, the labor of man in the harvest field was a sacrificial act of worship (Leviticus 2). It was service, “*the reasonable act*” of Romans 12:1-2. The equivalent is *latreuō*, to worship by serving. The term encompasses both physical labor and spirituality. They are bound together. The so-called secular is sacred. It is the other side of the same coin, an expression of

the same value. It has an agrarian ring to it, a term that brings us close to the earth.

The second role of Adam was to *guard* the garden. *Shamar* appears 469 times in the Old Testament. It means to keep or guard, to observe or to watch. It is the term behind the concept and practice of the watchman. That is a prayer idea. It infers the role of intercession. It can mean to ‘hedge about,’ to put a circle around – by and in prayer. It is a term for surveillance. It demands focus and attention. For our purposes, we define *shamar* as “taking a position in the interest of God with regard to a person, place or thing.” This is the call for the mobilization of intercessors to ‘watch’ the city or the nation in prayer. We have no such organized practice of ‘watching’ in prayer. Listen to Jesus, “Could you not watch with me for one hour?” That was when he was facing his trial, the cross. Now we may be facing our hour, and we are still not watching.

The idea of intercession is that of representing God’s concerns in the earth through human agency. “*Except the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain; unless the LORD protects the city, its watchmen stand guard in vain*” (Psalm 127:1). God watches in our watching. He does so as he is engaged by our praying. Our “watching” positions us in alignment with heaven, out of concern for His concerns. It is not our watching, or our prayer that is laden with power. The power is in the watching of God, but it is released in our alignment with God, which is a matter of and out of prayer.

We are to *shamar*, to keep, guard, or to observe. We give our careful and prayerful attention to a person, place or thing, with God’s purpose in mind. It also includes the idea of keeping God’s commandments, and of guarding one’s own heart, and observing God’s boundaries, including the Sabbath, our time of rest. It aims to maintain what is valuable and sacred, watching at those boundaries.

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The concept of *shamar* was integral to the covenant relationship between God and His people. The Israelites were commanded to *shamar* their laws and the decrees given them by God. It was a sign of their faithfulness and devotion to Yahweh. They kept the law, and the law kept them. As we have noted, this term first appears in connection to the Edenic garden and reflects the agrarian culture of early Israel. Shepherds were also to *shamar* their flocks, providing for and protecting them. Men are to guard their wives and families. Mayors, their cities and governors, their states. Safety and well-being are foremost, but they are not achieved alone. They are put into effect by engaging God through the prayer-watch, through intercessory dependence. This idea of guarding was not superficial. It was deeply ingrained in cultural and religious customs. By the discipline of *shamar*, they preserved their culture. By ignoring it, Adam lost access to the garden – and plunged the world into sin.

Though this informs our intercession, the term also has implications for any position of authority. The God of creation, of order and dominion, has engaged men, in Adam, to be extensions of God's order. In this unusual mode of prayer, of the watch, we engage the only One who can truly keep us, our garden and our world. Of course, Adam failed in the watch, and he lost the garden, and his dominion. But God's grace is relentless. When Adam's sin had reached its zenith in the time of Noah, and global judgment was inevitable, God again blessed humanity through Noah.

The Perennial Blessing God

"God blessed Noah," and he repeated much of what he had said to Adam, *"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"* (Genesis 9:1), but the commission stopped short of ruling and having dominion. Man would be a victim in the world in which he was meant to rule. The world was now upside down. There was adversity between men and beasts, bloodshed, a laborious life,

and yet there was a covenant, though tenuous.

Noah, as if attempting to create a new Eden, “*planted a vineyard*,” (9:20) and plunged into a regrettable sin due to the wine from the vineyard. Two chapters later (Genesis 11), humanity is seen, gathered at Babel to create a godless global center, an astrological observatory. God interrupted the explosiveness of sin again and scattered humans, leaving the tower unfinished and abandoned. Then, in Genesis 12, He blessed and called Abram. Through him, again, all the earth would be blessed. But Israel, his sons and daughters, failed.

The collection of Psalms, were gathered after the return of Abraham’s children from Babylon. That represented another new beginning. Perhaps for this reason, the book of Psalms opens with a blessing (Psalm 1). It pictures a tree planted by the rivers – we are back in Eden. It pictures leaves that do not wither – a perpetual spring. The psalm begins with the promise of ‘blessing,’ and ends with the word, ‘perish.’ It is a Torah psalm, offering instruction to the post-exilic community about how to preserve the blessing that has so often been forfeited before. Again, the people of God failed, shutting up the kingdom for themselves.

When Jesus came, in the early chapters of Matthew (5-7), he is found blessing. And when he leaves the earth, he pronounces a blessing (Luke 24:50). Pentecost is the creation of a blessed people, called to bless others. We do not receive a blessing for it to terminate with us, but for it to pass through us.

The idea of blessing permeates scripture occurring in the NKJV 495 times, 117 times in the New Testament, 50 times in the gospels. It is God’s desire to bless. Seven blessings occur in the midst of the Revelation – even earth’s rebellion cannot stop God’s blessing from coming. Paul writes to Timothy, instructing him on setting the Ephesian church in order. He envisions the church as an intercessory missional community. He urges men to pray everywhere, lifting holy hands, the pos-

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ture of priests when they pronounced a blessing. This is the call that is now incumbent on the church – to offer a priestly blessing. This reaches back to Genesis. This was humanity's purpose, to convey God's blessing. Now, we do so to a sinful and fallen world. If the pre-fall world needed to be blessed, how much more is the blessing of God needed now?

Israel blessed King David, and they believed that the blessing would intensify in Solomon. Solomon reigned at the pinnacle of Israel's prestige, power and wealth. He blessed the Lord who had given him the right to sit on the throne. Notice how God's blessing and the king's throne coalesce (1 Kings 1:48). With the blessing of God, the throne was established (1 Kings 2:45). God then reigned among the people. And the priestly people of God, as ambassadors, we're to speak and convey that blessing to the nations. The blessing is a gift. It is pure grace.

Blessing is an expression of God's delight. In setting a man or woman on a throne, God is blessing, desiring to delight in the person. He delighted in Solomon, setting him on the throne, merging blessing and power. He did this because "he loved Israel," Though Israel has a unique relationship with God, He blesses other nations as well. The godly disposition of a king, his power and dominion, are a means of conveying God's blessing to nations that honor Him. He establishes thrones, blessing them for the purpose of "*justice and righteousness*" (1 Kings 10:9; 2 Chronicles 9:8).

The ultimate blessing is tied to the supreme throne, "*Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!*" (Revelation 5:13). Before this ultimate day, when God, in Christ, consolidates all authority and centralizes the power of blessing, we have the right and responsibility of blessing. "*Bless the LORD,*" we are commanded. Indeed, "*all His works*" are to bless Him. Especially, "*In all places of His dominion,*" we are to "*bless the LORD*" (Psalm 103:22). Again, slowly – We "*bless the Lord*" in "*all places of His dominion,*"

and that is every throne, since all authority is established by Him. The blessing, by a godly, priestly people, sanctifies the throne and impacts the one who sits on it. Its effect is justice and righteousness.

The Ambassador: Waking Up God Consciousness in Rulers

Even wicked men, who interface with God's ambassadors can change.

"At the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, [the wicked king of Babylon] lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation" (Daniel 4:34).

This is the hope, that in blessing kings and magistrates, mayors and councilpersons, we will wake up in them a sense of God's presence, and they will discover the reality of God and offer praise and honor, acknowledging His dominion, as Nebuchadnezzar did. Ambassadors, through prayer, with the intent of blessing, awaken in royals and those in authority, the presence of God, the sacredness of the chair in which they sit.

The blessing is no insignificant thing. God chose to bless Hagar, the mother of Ishmael by Abram. *"I will bless her,"* God declared, *"and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her"* (Genesis 17:16). Indeed. This is the power of blessing.

When God blesses, the blessing is pervasive. David was told when the ark of the covenant, the symbol of the veritable throne of God on the earth, landed in Obed-Edom's house, that *"The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God"* (2 Samuel 6:12). *"So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness"* (2 Samuel 6:12). He knew the seat, the place of God's presence, would bring blessing to Jerusalem.

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Michal, David's wife and Saul's daughter, despised the worship of David in connection with the ark's return. The Ark was God's throne of mercy, and it had been exiled during the reign of Saul who made no attempt to recover it. Michal saw no value in it either and she despised David's worshipful behavior. She should have joined him in celebration. Instead, she forfeited the blessing associated with the ark and God's presence (2 Samuel 6:20). She bore no royal children and ended the marriage to the king.

Jesus made it simple. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt 5:3). Here is blessing and dominion, the kingdom. And it belongs to the humble, those who value the spiritual above the natural.

Review:

1. The role of the ambassador flexes. It evolves. And yet, it is rooted in timeless, Biblical principles.
2. Talk about the relationship between blessing and dominion, and between blessing and prayer. Can you see how these relate?
3. God placed man in a *garden* – but he did so, with the *globe* in mind. What does that mean? What garden are you in? Have you found the hidden door in the garden wall that opens to the globe? It's there. Do you believe that? Keep the garden, gain the globe; lose the garden, lose the globe.
4. Placed in a garden, some geographic assignment by God, we are to grow and guard our garden. Discuss these ideas.
5. Talk about the implications of watching – of *shamar*, and its relationship to prayer.
6. Review the persistence of God – to bless humanity, in Adam, in Noah, through Abram, through the house of David and now through the church. Are we as stubborn as they were before us? Do we see our role?
7. What is meant by 'waking up God consciousness?'

APPENDIX A

Supporting Documents For Your Effort

The Post-Training Process

The optimal goal would be that ALL those on the ambassador team have completed the training. Extraordinary discipline is important. One deviation from your peace mission by a rogue member of your team that exploits the entrance they have gained into the office of a significant leader could guarantee that you never return, that your mission has failed, and that the sector of the church you represent is misunderstood, or branded in a less than admirable way.

There may be a need for confrontation with some figure in authority over some moral or spiritual issue, and for earnest dialogue – but that must not be the purpose of the first mission. The immediate purpose is peace, movement toward reconciliation out of unconditional love. The heavy building blocks of truth that may need to be delivered require a strong bridge.

The first team of ambassadors must operate out of the purity of a priestly call. Christ, before his accusers, was silent. He listened. He offered no defense, no excuse. He came as a

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lamb. His answer would come in the form of his resurrection, his indestructibility. The subsequent message of his followers, the echo of his crucifixion and resurrection, could not be shut out. They could not be silenced. Numbering only 20,000 in 100 A.D., in a bit more than two centuries, their number had exploded to 20 million. They were ten million strong in an empire of 60 million, one of six was a Christian, 14 percent. There were another 10 million who had spilled over beyond the edges of Rome's jurisdiction. The movement was unstoppable.

Despite the blood of the martyrs, a river of red that claimed the lives of their best minds, their leaders, their noblest examples, their most mature elders – the church marched on. When one believer picked up the fallen torch and carried the message, they did so knowing they faced imminent death. But they knew Christ, and the power of his resurrection.

The high point in the beatitudes is the role of peacemakers (Mt. 5). Everything moves to that high point. This is our call – to be agents of peace, to offer amnesty based on the forgiveness of God in Christ at the cross. Three characteristics of the blessed are Godward – poverty of spirit before God, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, and purity of heart. The poor in spirit are promised an inheritance. Those who are hungry for righteousness will be filled. The pure in heart will see God. The blessings intensify. Those who recognize that only God can meet their deepest need, the poor in spirit, hunger and thirst for righteousness and justice, and that produces in us, purity of heart before God. All of these are godward. No one can understand or satisfy spiritual poverty or fill us with righteousness or make us pure or even know that we are pure in heart. To be a peacemaker demands purity of heart, and hunger for justice, and humility characterized by spiritual poverty.

Then, three characteristics have others in mind. Before others, and with others, we lament. We have the capacity for tears. A lament, however, is more than its emotion. It is a form of

prayer, a kind of protest offered to God that insist that things must change, that the world, or something in it is not right and needs the attention of heaven. Forty percent of the psalms are protest psalms, laments. As peacemakers, we lament over the brokenness of our world. Such inner agitation has a danger about it. While we lament, we must remain meek. We are to be disciplined toward others. We do not strike out and take matters in our own hands. We show mercy, feeling the pain of the other.

All of these characteristics enable our peacemaking role - tears (lament), and the disposition of meekness, and the posture of mercy. Yet, such qualities will not always be a guarantee that we will be received with a welcome. Our modest attempt at peacemaking will at times, be met with hostility and persecution. Heaven identifies us as ‘the sons, the children, of God.’ We are promised the ‘kingdom of God.’ Peacemaking is at the heart of the work of the ambassador.

The task of ambassador of the kingdom of God, commissioned by the kingdom’s embassy, the church, may not be pleasant. God wants kings and nations to know Him. This is always His desire. At the birth of Christ, kings, magi, men of influence, worshipped. Where are the kings who now worship the Lord? Where are the nations that will be joined to the Lord in the last days? Which nations will be sheep nations? Godly, in their values? Christian, in their orientation? Whether we experience a glorious reception or a chilling rejection – our mission is not negotiable.

You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me. NIV, Matthew 10:18.

The English Standard Version says, “*You will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles*” – or the nations. Before we are ‘dragged,’ summoned before

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kings and courts and tribunals, let's go voluntarily. This is our chance to offer a 'witness' to nations. This will be, the Berean Standard Bible reminds us, "*On my [Jesus] account,*" because of our identity with Christ, with his church. The Contemporary English Version reads, "*Because of me, you will be dragged before rulers and kings to tell them and the Gentiles about your faith.*"

Jesus is referring here to a compulsory summons. In such a moment, he says, the Holy Spirit will whisper to us what to say. The ambassador ministry proposed here is a *non*-compulsory friendly visit, one in which we go – blessing. The offer of amnesty, of forgiveness, is still on the table. Our first goal, however, as noted before, is neither evangelism nor prophetic complaints. It is to open the door, to build a bridge, to create the potential for ongoing dialogue, to bless – and thereby, to open a door for the awareness of God's presence and watchful care.

STEP ONE: Create your team. As noted above, the ideal is that all of them have gone through the training. If not, you will need to rehearse certain aspects of the training with them. Vetting is very important. Note: Going through the training alone does not recommend the potential ambassador.

STEP TWO: Ambassadors do not *go* – they are *sent*. You are creating a team in connection with the Church (A collage of churches that represents a segment of churches in the city – or, in some cases, a church, a ministry, etc.) The leadership of the sending church(es) will need to be a part of the vetting process.

STEP THREE: The sending agency and the members of the ambassador team need to spend time praying together. Out of prayer, they need to determine the following:

1. What is the *initial message*? Wordsmithing is very important here.
2. *To whom* will the ambassador team be *sent*?
 - a. Mayor, local businesses, city council members,

school board, county commissioners, Police Chief, Fire Chief, City Manager, etc.

[Start local, expand to the state, the Governor, State Representatives, Senators, state officials, then to US Congressional members, US Senators, etc.].

- b. You may find that you need multiple teams. Starting locally is important, since this is where the greatest impact of your ambassador team will ultimately be felt. Start in such a way as to allow your team to mature and expand from one to multiple teams. You may send teams first, to businesses, even to leaders and managers in the congregation as warm and friendly open doors. Then to people of influence and power in the community with whom you do not have a relationship.
 - c. Remember, the goal here is not one and done. You are building a bridge for ongoing communication.
3. Who will comprise the team(s)? Who will be the *spokesperson(s)*?
 4. What blessing will you offer? What gift will you carry – something more symbolic than a thing of value! You don't want to be accused of offering a bribe.
 5. What will the time frame of the visit be? In a week, within the month, etc.
 6. Who exactly will the team represent? Ambassadors do not speak for themselves – they carry messages. Will this team represent a single congregation? A ministry? A collage of churches? The goal is peacemaking, keeping, on the bridge of reconciliation.
 7. Who will make the appointment?
 - a. Will this need to be a formal request, or can it be informal?
 - b. In the case of the mayor, that will often be determined by the size of the city; and in some cases, the political orientation of the person in the office.

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Note: Once you pass beyond the small town, to a city, in some cases of a few thousand, the process becomes more formal. At the state and national levels, there are often gate keepers and protocol issues. Theoretically, when visiting elected officials, you do not need clearance, they are your representatives. However, you want to verify access or your trip may be in vain.⁴³

⁴³ Calling on congressional members: You can find representative's contact information on their official website (e.g., house.gov or senate.gov) or by using resources like www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member. You can also call the Capitol switchboard in Washington at 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected to your representative's office. Your state house will have a similar number. The website USA.gov may be helpful. When you call, identify yourself as a constituent. You will be passed to a staff member. Give your name and state that you are a constituent from their district. State your purpose: "Our team of 3-5, has been commissioned to meet with the representative on behalf of _____ church (or the churches of _____ city)." You can quickly see why representing more than one congregation might carry more weight. In most cases, the aide is going to press you to explain why you are calling and what you would like the representative to do. But you have no petition to bring, no action to demand. In some cases, it will be difficult to explain your mission to an aide. "We are a group who have been designated as an ambassador team from our church/the churches of our community. We have no petition, no complaint, no call for action. Rather, we are bearing a rather personal message to the representative. May we have a few minutes with our representative?" This explanation might not get you an audience. You are likely to be vetted by a staff member, due to busy schedules. You may have to make your case to the staff member to gain a fifteen-minute audience with the representative. Don't despair. Building a positive relationship with the staff is also crucial. Be concise and respectful. Respecting the time of the staff will suggest that you will be even more respectful of the time of the representative. Be brief and direct, while remaining polite and respectful. Focus on your purpose. Follow up with a thank-you email or letter. Provide any additional information promised. Again, you do not need formal permission to call on either a state or national representative. You may show up at their office unannounced and ask to see them. However, protocol adds layers to the process. Do your homework, be patient, and respectful. Here is a tip. State Senators and representatives are often more accessible at home than at the state capitol. You or someone in your congregation may know a staff member – or the State Senator or Representative themselves. Use that avenue to reach out. Similarly, you may have a better chance at connecting with your congressional representative by going through the local office. All of them maintain an office in their district. Someone in your congregation may know someone working at that office or on the staff of the representative. You may find the representative more accessible when they are in the local office than in Washington. For

- c. If the request is denied – what will you do? In most cases, you should probably regroup, pray, ask God for wisdom and an open door. Send a note indicating your intent, and noting your desire, if possible, to renew the request.
- d. An alternative, if denied, is to send an invitation, for example, to the mayor, or the dignitary, to meet on your turf – for a lunch, for some event, etc.
8. When will you convene and hear a report from the ambassador team and consider the next steps?
9. Remember, you should develop a list of ‘those in authority and with influence.’ You are first calling to pray for them; and then, to seek an audience to convey your concern for the community and for them – to bless them.
10. Out of these moments, goodwill should come. Don’t be surprised if you also experience open doors, and opportunities to assist, by both service and ministry in the city. There is so much pain that only the church can address.

Proper Address

- Mayor: The Honorable [Mayor’s Name]: and in speech, Mr. Mayor or Madam Mayor, or Mayor [Last Name].
- Senator: Dear Senator [Insert Last Name].
- Member of the House of Representatives: Dear Mr. or Ms. Representative [Insert Last Name].
- U.S. Senators: Dear Senator [name].

you – and your ambassador team – the visit to either the state or US representative may be memorable. For them, you may be, despite the nature of your visit, one of a thousand or more with whom they meet in a short span of time. This is not a one-shot matter. You are building a relationship. If you are refused access, don’t make a fuss. Call again. Be respectful but persistent. It is possible to get an aide whose faith disposition considers your mission unworthy of the representative’s time. And it is possible to step into an environment that is hostile to faith, particularly, to conservative Christians simply due to the political and religious leaning of the representative. We tend to surround ourselves with those who reflect our values. Don’t be shocked by an abrupt rejection.

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- Speaker of the House: Dear Mr. or Madam Speaker.
- A Chairperson or Subcommittee Member:
Dear Mr. or Ms. [Name], Chair, [Committee Name];
Or, Member, [Committee Name].
- City Council Member: Dear Council Member [Last Name]: When speaking directly to them, Council Member [Last Name] – shows respect.

Addressing a mayor, use a formal salutation or title to show respect for their position. You can also use “Mr. Mayor” or “Madam Mayor” in direct speech.

In Writing

- Use the appropriate title in the address. Show respect, honor.
Start the letter, or address a card, with a formal salutation (See Above).
- In larger cities, you may find it necessary to place your request in writing.

Address, as above.

I am requesting fifteen minutes of your time. I am a resident of _____. [You may elaborate ... I was born here, lived here x number of years, and recently moved here...] I love the city/town. And I want to thank you personally for your leadership and service to the community.

I have no complaints. I will bring no petition. I do represent a lovely group of people who, like me, care about you and the city.

May we have the privilege of a brief audience with you at your earliest convenience

Sincerely,

Name

Contact Information

- In some cases, you may be able to call for an appointment.

I am _____. I am requesting a brief meeting with the Mayor/or Title, sheerly for the purpose of getting acquainted.

I am a community resident [You may elaborate, as above]...

If pressed, you might elaborate further.

I have no petition or complaint, I am simply requesting a brief audience with the Mayor along with a few friends to express our support.

- In larger cities, it may be necessary to meet with an assistant before you meet with the Mayor or the person of note with whom you seek an audience. The higher the rank, the more procedural barriers. Be patient. Jump through the hoops as necessary. Your grace to those who serve the person with whom you seek an appointment will commend you.

If you are, in the end, denied access – write a letter, and express your desired purpose – prayer, a blessing. And offer a raincheck if the Mayor has a change of heart. Then, after a few months, try again.

- Remember, you are being SENT. In a formal request, you may need to name the sending agency, ministry name or church(es) or agency. It is always better to represent a collage of churches, the ‘Church of the city,’ than a single congregation or to go as an independent agent. An AMBASSADOR is SENT, and STANDS BETWEEN, reconciling, communicating, drawing two sides

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together, finding commonality, always posturing with humility and a servant heart.

IN PERSON

Be Brief

“Your Honor/Mr./Madam Mayor _____.”

“Thank you for your willingness to meet with us.”

Introductions ...

“We represent ... SENDING AGENCY...”

Presentation of Gift – flowers, memento, Bible, etc. ...

“We have learned recently of the Biblical mandate to pray for kings and those in authority. And we feel, as do the pastors and churches that sent us, that we have failed at times to support you and this office adequately. We want to ask for your forgiveness. We love our city. And we believe God loves it, and the people here, and we also believe that by prayer, we invite His blessings. So, we are committed to pray for you, for our city, and its needs – for God’s goodness and blessings.”

“May we pray for you now?”

Wait for the response ...

Offer a prayer – typically, one person praying, others agreeing.

“Your Honor/Mr./Madam Mayor – It would be a privilege to pray for the city. Are there needs in the city for which our churches could pray?”

“In fact, could we return in a few months to check in with you again?”

“Thank you for allowing us to come.”

DON’T OVERSTAY YOUR WELCOME!

APPENDIX B

The Impact Of The Church On Culture

The Impact of the Church on Culture and the World

1. “According to a 2016 Faith Counts study by the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, *religion contributes about \$1.2 trillion of socioeconomic value annually to the U.S. economy.* That is equivalent to being the world’s 15th-largest national economy, outpacing nearly 180 other countries and territories. It’s more than the global annual revenues of the world’s top 10 tech companies, including Apple, Amazon and Google. It’s also more than 50% larger than the global annual revenues of America’s six largest oil and gas companies.”⁴⁴
2. Another report on the same study by Brian and Melissa Grim, estimated the socio-economic *impact as being*

⁴⁴ Brian Grim, “The Unseen Economic and Social Impacts of American Faith,” See: <https://www.deseret.com/faith/2021/5/12/22429166/the-unseen-economic-social-impact-of-american-faith-brian-grim-religious-freedom-business-foundation/#:~:text=%E2%80%99CReligion%20contributes%20about%20%241.2%20trillion,annually%20to%20the%20American%20economy.>

as high as \$4.8 trillion. Even the lower estimate of \$1.2 trillion, at the time of the study, 2016, was “more than the annual revenues of the top 10 tech companies, including Apple, Amazon, and Google combined.”⁴⁵

3. “Each year ***congregations spend \$84 billion*** on their operations, ranging from paying hundreds of thousands of personnel to paying for goods and services as diverse as flowers, sounds systems, maintenance and utilities. Almost all is spent right *in the local community*.”⁴⁶
4. The Lake Institute completed a 2019 National Study of USA Congregations’ Economic Practices. They discovered that “***81% of the revenue that comes into congregations is from contributions.*** Another 13% are from other traditional sources like fundraisers and endowments. And about 6% is coming from rentals.” There were additional “innovative funding strategies” but they did not “register on the scale.” ***What drives the church and its overflow onto the community is unlike anything else in culture,*** and that is the ***benevolence of its members,*** citizens who believe in the cause and freely contribute to its mission.⁴⁷
5. “Congregations are like magnets attracting economic activity ranging from weddings to lectures, conventions and even tourism. For instance, 120,000 congregations report that people visit them to view their art and architecture.”⁴⁸
6. “Schools attached to many of these congregations... ***employ 420,000 full-time teachers and train 4.5 million students each year.*** By comparison, this is the same num-

⁴⁵ Ben Johnson, “What Does Faith Add to the Economy? \$1.2 Trillion, and Counting,” Religion & Liberty Online, May 17, 2019. See: <https://rlo.acton.org/archives/108773-what-does-faith-add-to-the-economy-1-2-trillion-and-counting.html>.

⁴⁶ Brian Grim, “The Unseen ...,” Ibid.

⁴⁷ Johnson, Ibid.

⁴⁸ Brian Grim, “The Unseen ...,” Ibid.

- ber as the total population of Ireland or New Zealand.”⁴⁹
7. “Congregations provide **130,000 alcohol recovery programs**...” One congregation alone, in California, the Saddleback Church, operates a “Celebrate Recovery program that has helped more than 27,000 individuals over the past 25 years.”⁵⁰
 8. “Congregations also provide **120,000 programs to help the unemployed**.”⁵¹ Some congregations have employment training service centers.
 9. Though Christian congregations are known for social standards that run counter to contemporary social-moral trends, that does not stop them from being loving, even to those who they might differ with, morally. For example, “**nearly 26,000 congregations are engaged in some form of active ministry to help people living with HIV/AIDS**.” That is, according to some estimates, “one HIV/AIDS ministry for every 46 people who are HIV-positive.”⁵² That’s grace.
 10. For example, with the sponsorship of Walgreens, pastor’s wives in Chicago from some 50 churches hosted free screening for HIV and other diseases.⁵³ Such things are not altogether uncommon – church-people care.
 11. “The data shows that **congregations overwhelmingly include a society-building, outward community focus, with over 320,000 congregations helping to recruit volunteers for programs outside their walls**, to nonreligious groups, ranging from Big Brothers and Big Sisters to the United Way and the American Red Cross.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Brian Grim, “The Unseen ...,” Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

12. And, “beyond what happens at local congregations and schools... **tens of thousands of other religiously affiliated charities**, health care facilities and institutions of higher learning also doing these sorts of good works every day. These **add another \$303 billion** of socio-economic impact to the U.S. economy each year.”⁵⁵
13. Even small rural churches have an impact. This includes congregations with as few as 25 members, according to a “Partners for Sacred Places,” study conducted in partnership with The Duke Endowment and the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute who studied 87 congregations.⁵⁶ The report “The Economic Halo Effect of Rural United Methodist Churches in North Carolina.” **Churches in the study “on average, were responsible for more than \$735,000 per year in economic impact in their local communities.”**⁵⁷
14. The research focused on six areas: 1) community-serving programs, 2) outdoor recreation space, 3) direct spending, 4) education and childcare, 5) magnet effect (drawing visitors to the area for events), and 6) individual impact (guidance and support in one-on-one settings).⁵⁸
15. Common ways churches benefit the community are obvious — “organizing food pantries and directing childcare centers.” Less obvious are food programs that provide a cheap meal and combine it with community connections. Gethsemane UMC in Greensboro is “the hot dog church,” providing a Saturday hot dog lunch. Many churches do similar things, with cheap, discounted or complimentary meals, drawing people together, far

⁵⁵ Brian Grim, “The Unseen ...,” Ibid.

⁵⁶ Emilie Haertsch, “Rural Churches are Economic Powerhouses ...” See: <https://faithandleadership.com/rural-churches-are-economic-powerhouses-their-communities>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

- beyond the congregation, uniting a community.⁵⁹
16. Think about the value that ***churches offer in the launch of new families*** – weddings. And in the grief and support process ***when families experience a loss*** – funerals. The qualitative impact on emotional stability and health is almost inestimable.⁶⁰
 17. Apart from the emotional and relational support that is priceless, there is also an immediate quantitative economic impact. Outsiders are drawn to the area overnight, eating, purchasing gas and often hotel rooms.⁶¹
 18. It is not true, as some public officials seem to believe, that churches only serve their own members. The Halo study found that ***“72% of those who benefited from the presence of, and programs hosted by, the participating churches were not congregational members.”***⁶² This is because true churches are missional.
 19. Many churches, especially rural and small-town churches, double as civic spaces. They are voting places, places where kids and youth connect, where Scout meetings occur. ***Churches offer the community playgrounds and ball fields.*** Churches are community assets.
 20. Just the presence of a church has, some suggest, an emotional and civilizing impact – the view of the cross, the reminder to love one another, the call to higher personal moral and interpersonal behaviors.
 21. With the poverty rate so high, and food insecurity reaching a level as high as 20 percent in some months, especially for single-parent families, folks look not only for food sources but for ***emotional support*** – something food stamps alone can't provide. A bag of gro-

⁵⁹ Emilie Haertsch, “Rural Churches are Economic Powerhouses ...” See: <https://faithandleadership.com/rural-churches-are-economic-powerhouses-their-communities>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

ceries is one thing, but a smile and a hug is even greater security, “Someone cares!” Some congregations have developed “a client-choice pantry so people could have dignity — for folks to be able to choose their food, to know a friendly face and receive a hug.”⁶³

22. When the Halo Study assessed one congregation’s direct and indirect community impact, they tallied “about \$1.1 million annually in economic impact” on a relatively small town and region. The pastor and the congregation had no idea regarding the far-reaching degree of their efforts. The Halo study “makes clear that membership numbers and budgets do not tell the whole story.” It appears that even “**very small congregations, with tiny budgets, have outsized importance to their communities**. If they were to close, the towns would lose economic resources and, in some cases, the only civic spaces available to all. The study suggests that new metrics are needed to determine where to direct denominational resources and what defines a successful church.” The researchers noted, “Worship attendance does not tell the full story of a church’s importance.”⁶⁴
23. The Founders of the nation viewed Christian churches “as a central institution within American life, because religion provided the moral foundation of self-restraint and community awareness necessary for the success of republican self-government.”⁶⁵ It was believed that “**the American experiment would not succeed without the moral training churches provided to citizens**.” This is an idea that has recently been vigorously disputed for al-

⁶³ Emilie Haertsch, “Rural Churches are Economic Powerhouses ...” See: <https://faithandleadership.com/rural-churches-are-economic-powerhouses-their-communities>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Andy Lewis, “Some positive Benefits Churches Bring To Communities: See: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://erlc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Some-Positive-Benefits-Churches-Bring-to-Communities.pdf.”

most 70 years – and we may be paying the consequences for taking the path for displacing public prayer, expelling God from schools, going to war against the Ten Commandments and similar tactics.

24. “Churches,” it is argued, “surely, have contributed to the success of America by encouraging virtue,” despite what libertarians and atheists want us to believe. Further, “social science research has also shown that churches provide direct and indirect economic and social benefits to communities.”
25. Liberals dislike the tax-exempt status of churches and ministries, but studies indicate that “churches bring benefits to communities that outweigh the loss of revenue from their tax-exempt status. In fact, **if it were not for churches, the government would have to expend public funds to replace the community benefits that churches provide.**”⁶⁶
26. There are almost 350,000 churches in the nation, and some 110 per county, that “provide jobs for the community, and churches [that] support a variety of local businesses.” There are a bit more than 100,000 cities, towns, hamlets and villages, incorporated and unincorporated, and what they all have in common is a church – and between such places, are also found country churches. The church is the glue that holds us together.
27. Churches are factors in choices families make in “choosing to establish residence in a local community. This, in turn, helps support local businesses and contributes to property tax payments. Therefore,” in yet another way, “churches provide direct economic benefits to the community,” also encouraging “community

⁶⁶ Andy Lewis, “Some positive Benefits Churches Bring To Communities: See: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://erlc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Some-Positive-Benefits-Churches-Bring-to-Communities.pdf.”

- growth, job creation, and overall economic vitality.”⁶⁷
28. Churches are open to all – to those who are discouraged and depressed, the poor and vulnerable, couples struggling to keep a family together. **No social programs could rise to match the benefit to the community provided by the various congregations.** Marriage seminars, civility, domestic violence abatement, child abuse, morality elevation, volunteerism – all come from the presence of congregations and their members.
 29. It is true that on occasion, a community or the nation is rocked by a sexual scandal in a congregation, and we all go breathless. Such moments not only disappoint us but shame us – and that is the irony. We are scandalized because the very institution that has set a high bar for all of us and urged us to live a selfless and exemplary life, is flawed – and staffed by flawed, less than perfect people. While the disappointment is real, and the victims no less wounded, we are incensed because of the double-violation – that of the victim, and that of the less-than acceptable behavior of some pastor or staff member against the standard itself of the institution. The standard is noble, as is the institution, though it is staffed with less-than-perfect humans. We dare not destroy so much good, because of comparably, so little, but glaring evil.
 30. Social scientists say that “**being a member of a religious community increases one’s duty to serve others in the community.**... Churches help communities complete vitally important social projects, for which the government would need to fund if churches did not provide such support.
 31. A comprehensive study of religious congregations in six metropolitan communities found that **91 percent of**

⁶⁷Andy Lewis, “Some positive Benefits Churches Bring To Communities: See: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://erlc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Some-Positive-Benefits-Churches-Bring-to-Communities.pdf.”

religious congregations provided at least one social service... and, similarly, 87 percent of the congregations in a Philadelphia survey provided at least one social service to the community..." There is more, "even conservative estimates claim... larger congregations, representing approximately 75 percent of the religious population in America, provide at least one social service to the community..."⁶⁸

32. A detailed study of congregations in Philadelphia said flatly, "If it were not for the impressive collective work of some 2,120 local religious congregations, life in Philadelphia would have become extremely harsh."⁶⁹

Each congregation provided, on average, 2.33 different social assistance programs.

33. Churches increase religiosity, "and increased religiosity results in positive social contributions." It "influences individuals' obligations to perform non-religious moral acts... [resulting in an] increased propensity to participate in community-building, moral projects, such as giving blood... community volunteering," etc.⁷⁰
34. One study indicates that **each church "contributes volunteers to three organizations on average,** though some churches provide dozens of volunteers to different projects."
35. Another national study found "that **church members volunteer 56 million hours each year to organizations** outside their local congregations, aiding with human service projects, educational attainment, cultural awareness and training, and environmental improvement."⁷¹
36. One study sought to quantify "the exact value of the

⁶⁸ Andy Lewis, "Some positive Benefits Churches Bring To Communities: See: [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://erlc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Some-Positive-Benefits-Churches-Bring-to-Communities.pdf](https://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://erlc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Some-Positive-Benefits-Churches-Bring-to-Communities.pdf)."

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

volunteering and community building benefits churches provide to local areas,” or the “replacement value of the social and volunteering benefits that churches provide to communities.” In large metropolitan communities, *each congregation “provides support equal to one full-time social service employee.”* That is huge. In a comprehensive study of Philadelphia, researchers valued “community services at \$115,009 per congregation and \$230,018,400 for all the religious congregations in the city.” That’s a quarter of a billion dollars!⁷²

37. Studies also correlate religious involvement “with higher math and reading scores and greater educational aspirations... Students who frequently attend church have improved ability to allocate time and achieve goals... *religiously connected students are five times less likely than their peers to skip school.*” And there tends to be a higher degree of parental involvement that affects “children’s educational capacities and achievements. Parents with higher levels of religiosity raise children who more consistently complete homework, attend class, and complete degree programs.”⁷³ Can that be replaced?
38. Churches, it seems, by the positive atmosphere, the moral character building, the sense of divine providence and a blessed life, guided by an unseen hand, intensifies “educational, psychological, and moral training... which result in positive present and future educational outcomes for students.”⁷⁴
39. It is often at church, with high levels of support and encouragement, that *youth learn public speaking, service, civic skills, networking, leading and organiz-*

⁷² Andy Lewis, “Some positive Benefits Churches Bring To Communities: See: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://erlc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Some-Positive-Benefits-Churches-Bring-to-Communities.pdf.”

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

- ing, and representative governance.* The church environment is a training ground where individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds learn social skills.
40. There is a **correlation between religious involvement and a decrease in domestic violence**, including “decreased levels of assault, burglary, and larceny... decreased levels of violent crime... deviant behavior, such as drug use, violence, and delinquency among at-risk youth.”⁷⁵
 41. Such decreases heighten social order, and that increases “the likelihood that businesses will expand into local areas and bring economic opportunities, and [it also] decrease[s] government expenditures into programs and institutions that reduce, punish, and compensate for deviance.”⁷⁶
 42. There is a health benefit as well. **Church participation “is related to increased longevity...”** The average religious individual lives seven years longer than the average nonreligious individual, and this increases to fourteen years for African American individuals.”⁷⁷
 43. Research by Johns Hopkins scholars shows that “non-religious individuals have increased risks of dying from cirrhosis of the liver, emphysema, arteriosclerosis, cardiovascular diseases, and suicide.” Further, those who attend church are less likely to abuse alcohol or use drugs.⁷⁸
 44. Churches tend to promote physical health and a more productive life for members. “In a comprehensive survey of mental health studies, **81 percent of 91 studies showed that religion is positively associated with mental well-being**... Religious attendance has been shown to decrease stress, increase self-esteem, and give

⁷⁵ Andy Lewis, “Some positive Benefits Churches Bring To Communities: See: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://erlc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Some-Positive-Benefits-Churches-Bring-to-Communities.pdf>.”

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

individuals hope and a greater sense of life purpose... [faith] practice also is associated with decreased levels of depression and suicide... church involvement has been shown to improve mental health, and having strong mental health makes individuals more productive and less at risk for committing crimes.”⁷⁹

45. Social science researchers have identified churches “as ***having a significant impact on successful communities and societies.***” Communities are rich, not simply because of the capital in their banks or the loveliness of their geographic setting. Social capital enriches a community. That “is the outcome of trust, social networks, and social health, and it encourages economic and social opportunities for communities. Scholars have frequently referenced the role of religion in creating social capital and developing the positive societal impacts of social capital... which churches promote [and which] has been shown to increase economic growth.” It also, according to studies, “improves government performance,” and that is true “according to an evaluation of the fifty states.” Churches, it is claimed, by these independent studies, have diverse positive impacts on communities, ranging from increased trust, improved mental and physical health, decreased crime, and enhanced levels of volunteering and community outreach. These attributes build norms and values that encourage political stability and economic performance. Churches contribute to vitally important components of successful societies, and their presence in communities provides many benefits that cannot be measured solely by direct revenue.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Andy Lewis, “Some positive Benefits Churches Bring To Communities: See: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://erlc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Some-Positive-Benefits-Churches-Bring-to-Communities.pdf.”

⁸⁰ Ibid.

APPENDIX C

Key Facts From The Nation's Founding

1. The phrase 'Manifest Destiny' has met with resistance from those left of center, seeing it as Christian-right concept. The phrase was coined by John O'Sullivan in 1845, not in the time of the nation's founding. O'Sullivan was a democrat who favored state's rights and championed the South during the Civil War. By *Manifest Destiny* he meant, the overspreading of "*the continent allotted by Providence* for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." While Providence is noted, the term today is used on the right as a mantle of *a divinely mandated national purpose*, and on the left, as church-state entanglement and the desire to create a USA theocracy. Temperatures need to be lowered on both sides. It was Woodrow Wilson who used the term to emphasize the '*special calling*' he felt *for the nation* when he was President. Wilson exercised enormous influence in reshaping the world after WWI and creating the League of Nations. Wilson was a democrat.⁸¹
2. The Separatists, who wanted *the right to shape their own*

⁸¹ Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of the Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), xi-xii.

lives and faith, apart from the state, and from a state church, crossed the Atlantic in hopes of religious liberty, even if they had to find it in an uninhabited wilderness with tribal peoples who were pagan. They believed in a kind of destiny – that the Protestant Reformation had not gone far enough, and that neither England nor Europe would grant the liberty to see those purposes worked out. There had to be another place, a new and uncorrupted land, and for that reason, they came to North America.⁸²

3. At times, conservatives draw a straight line from Plymouth and the Pilgrims to the birth of the nation – and we should concede that such a narrative is overly simplistic.⁸³ The dots between the Mayflower Compact and the Declaration of Independence should be connected, but there is a great deal of debris between 1620 and 1776. New England religious colonialism had not been, in the subsequent years, central to the colonization of the states. Many immigrants came only for the wealth and opportunity that the new land presented, intending to exploit the opportunity and return to England or Europe.
4. Anglicanism in the South developed in a much different way than in the North. In the South, it made room for the justification of slavery. In Virginia, it espoused the belief that this was ‘the Promised Land,’ with strong Biblical overtones.⁸⁴ Some Virginians saw the experiment here as an extension of ‘God’s chosen England,’ whereas the New England Pilgrim saw their flight to the new land as an Exodus, a break from England. It was the ***New England separatism that grew into a robust sense of nationalism, and exceptionalism,***⁸⁵ that has found remarkable stamina and endurance. For decades, the idea has been assaulted by liberals, treated with

⁸² Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of the Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 4.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

the advantages of internationalism, doused with narratives about the dark spots in our history, and shamed with our worst failings – but the idea will not die.

5. ***The Founders are often cast as deist***, fundamentally neutral on matters of faith or practical agnostics. Certainly, not conservative. Not believers in the Bible, etc. When the trio of ***John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson*** gathered in the summer of 1776, they were tasked with ***creating a national seal***. Franklin was not known for being a man of faith. Jefferson created a Bible that excised the miraculous. He insisted that he was a Christian but did so on the basis of the moral excellence of Scripture – a standard to which he failed to adhere. Adams was the most devout of the trio. He was reared as a Congregationalist, but attended a number of different churches. Some have classified him as a Calvinist,⁸⁶ but he seemed more at home as a Unitarian,⁸⁷ with doubts about certain theologies, including the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. Yet, ***Franklin and Jefferson wanted, as the national seal, the image of Moses and the Exodus. America was the new Israel, the Promised Land,*** a new beginning, the creation of a center for faith for the world – what were they thinking? Adams wanted a theme more aligned with classical antiquity.
6. In his second inaugural speech, Jefferson – Mr. (So-Called) Separation of Church and State – reverted to this Biblical theme of chosenness. God, he asserted, by His providential hand, ***led “our fathers, as Israel of old,*** from their native land and planted them in a country flowing with all the necessities and comforts of life.”⁸⁸ Were these just words

⁸⁶ Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of the Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 4.

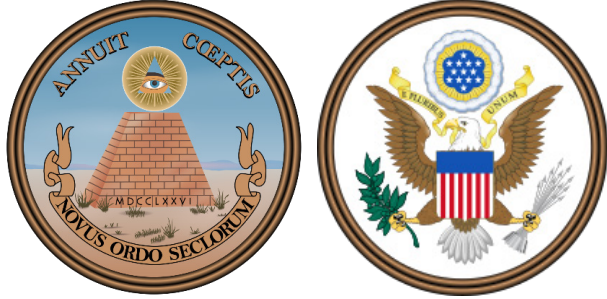
⁸⁷ See: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-03-02-3058>. This is a personal letter from John Adams to his son, John Quincy Adams. See also: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Founding-Fathers-Deism-and-Christianity-1272214>. And from the Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel06.html>.

⁸⁸ Quoted by Anders Stephanson, 5.

– or did Jefferson see a parallel? Was he witnessing what he thought was divine blessing and guidance on the nation? Why the hypocrisy, if he was the full-blown agnostic and deists the liberals propose him to be?

7. In the end, ***the Great Seal***, completed in 1782, depicted the national coat of arms of the United States. On the reverse, there is a unfinished pyramid topped by an ***Eye of Providence*** – a symbol of God’s watchful eye. The year, 1776, the date of the Declaration of Independence is noted in Roman numerals at the base of the pyramid. Three Latin phrases are found: *E Pluribus Unum*, ‘Out of many, one,’ noting national unity. ***Annuit cœptis, meaning, ‘He [God] has favored our undertakings.’*** And ***Novus ordo seclorum***, a prophetic anticipation, America would offer ***‘A new order of the ages.’*** It was designed by Charles Thomson, secretary of the Continental Congress, and William Barton. The Coat of Arms is a version of the USA flag displayed vertically. The eagle, who wears the coat of arms, is beneath a sunburst, a symbol of glory, with 13 stars, symbolizing the original colonies. In his right talon, the eagle holds an olive branch, with 13 leaves and olives, a symbol of peace, and it is to the right that the eagle’s head is turned, to a disposition of peace. In his left talon, he holds a cluster of 13 arrows, indicating the willingness of all 13 colonies to act together to defend their freedom. The colors are red, white, blue and gold.
8. Anders, in his book, *Manifest Destiny*, not a thoroughly conservative perspective, notes, that the expression, ‘manifest destiny,’ “was more than an expression: it was a whole matrix, a manner of interpreting the time and space of ‘America’ [which]... belonged to the peculiar fusion of providential and republican ideology that took place after the Revolution, a most dynamic combination of sacred and secular concepts.” What emerged was a vision of the United States “as a sacred place providentially selected for divine

purposes” that found a counterpart in the “secular idea of the new nation of liberty as a privileged ‘stage’” – a popular metaphor of that time, “for the exhibition of a new world order, a ‘great experiment’ for the benefit of human-kind as a whole.”⁸⁹



It is that vision – not of a theocracy, but of the symbiosis of the sacred and secular, church and state, that we seek to return. Not a secular state, and not the church as the state, but rather a tension – a state that protects the faith that gave it birth and its Christian principles; and church, which is salt and light in the culture, speaking truth to power with a prophetic voice.

9. It was not the English colonizers only who saw the new land as sacred. Spanish and Portuguese explorers saw their treks to the new world in the same way. The land itself was seen as sacred. They were all bearers of “the true Christian mission.” This was the New Canaan, a land of promise, to be established and worked ‘for the glory of God.’ They were a ‘remnant in the wilderness.’⁹⁰
10. The Puritans believed this above others – **they were reenacting the Exodus, chosen, to establish a light to the nations.** Today, we dismiss these ideas as marginal, but they were at the core of our nation’s founding – and we must ask, “Why?” Is there something in our DNA, our roots, which made us great? Something that we have lost?

⁸⁹ Quoted by Anders Stephanson, 5.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 6.

Something to which we must now return? Is this why the MAGA theme has become so powerful, and so much like a lightning rod – that we are divided over our past and our future, between nationalism and internationalism?

11. For the Puritans and others, these themes were often dominant – 1) Election and covenant. The nation had been chosen by God, and God had invited us to be in covenant with Him, in a similar, but distinct way, referenced in Israel's history. 2) The new settlers had a choice – to obey God, to live by His principles, to choose righteousness, to accept the noble, high road of destiny, or to be all about wealth and riches, and apostatize as a people. 3) They believed that somehow, they were fulfilling prophecy. That there was an eschatological purpose for the nation in Biblical prophecy and God's last day mission. They believed one of their calls was to reach the native population, and with them, go to the nations of the world and finish the Great Commission. 4) They believed that the territory, the land, was sacred – or could be made sacred, for godly communities and missional purposes.
12. They, the Puritans particularly, reworked the Hebrew tradition of divine election – the nation was called. Israel had been chosen by God to be the 'kingdom of priests' (Exodus 19:6), a 'holy nation.' God had chosen them, they, at Sinai, and in the new land, had to also choose Him. Adhering to Him, and turning away from idols, He would use them to touch the nations of the earth, to bless them. They, in turn, would be blessed with 'milk and honey.' The nations would see their prosperity and know that it was due to the hand of their God. As the colonialists poured into the new land, there was of course, no Israel. The Jews remained scattered through the nations, as they had been since 70 AD. Now, there would be another nation that would be 'a kingdom of priests,' a city on a hill. And "through the New Israel, universal righteousness will return, and the world will be regenerated."⁹¹

⁹¹ Quoted by Anders Stephanson, 7.

13. To be clear, we sometimes tell half the story. In the ***late 1600's and the early 1700's, the colonies languished spiritually***. New arrivals came for less than noble purposes of the pilgrims. Church attendance sagged. The half-way covenant⁹² sought to keep the young generation engaged as parents abandoned the church, at times, their faith. Morals had plummeted. Pregnancies forced marriages. Men frequently disappeared for the frontier's opportunities and never returned. The impact of the half-way covenant continued until the first Great Awakening.
14. There were always ***two Americas*** – Jamestown was a colony of all men. They were there, almost solely, for ***economic gains***, on behalf of England. They had a church, but they were ***superficially religious***. They stood in ***stark contrast*** to the Pilgrims, a self-contained ***community built around values***. The two colonies, superficially alike, were profoundly different.
15. The settlers of Jamestown and Plymouth both survived harsh conditions in establishing the first two permanent English settlements in North America. Jamestown was founded in 1607, a settlement along the James River off Chesapeake Bay. Life was hard, and nearly 80% of the settlers died the first year due to either disease or starvation.
16. The Jamestown settlers were an extension of England, not, as was Plymouth, an exodus. The ***Pilgrims came for religious freedom, the Jamestown colonists, as agents of the King*** for economic profit and trade. It was at Jamestown that slavery was introduced, and tobacco first grown as a cash crop.
17. England's legal codes guided Jamestown, while the May-

⁹² The "Half-Way Covenant" adopted by Puritans in 1662 was a compromise that allowed the children of baptized but unconverted church members to be baptized and considered partial members of the church, essentially granting them "half-way" membership without requiring a personal conversion experience, which was previously necessary for full church membership; this was done to address declining church participation among younger generations in New England Puritan communities. See: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Half-Way-Covenant>.

- flower Compact grounded the Plymouth settlement. Jamestown had strident relations with the natives, markedly more contentious, tragic, and warlike than did Plymouth.
18. At Plymouth, a Biblical structure and a spiritual motivation undergirded the community and created a vastly different ethos than at Jamestown. These are the ***two seeds, the two trees*** from which America pulls its fruit. In recent decades, it has behaved more like Jamestown, than Plymouth. From Jamestown, slavery took root, and competition marked the relationship between settlers, and contention with the natives. At Plymouth, a different tree was growing, guided by Biblical values, marked by collaboration and mutuality, and peace, when possible, with the natives. Here are our more cherished values – education, lawfulness, free but guarded and wholesome speech, equality, mutuality, love of the brotherhood and the new land, sobriety, benevolence, justice, truth, faith, honor, optimism and light. Jamestown seemed to breed competition, quarrelsomeness, division, every-man-for-himself, contention, superficial complicity to law, greed, selfishness, and pessimism. Today, we are beset with two paths – Jamestown or Plymouth.
 19. The region of Jamestown was much more hospitable than Plymouth. It was warm, had fertile soil, and it seemed a perfect place for crops. The colony was a joint stock venture, and Jamestown was established as a profit-making enterprise. The first settlers looked for gold or any other natural resource that might turn a profit for them and their investors. Its gold turned out to be tobacco, popular in England. That became their cash cow. ***By 1619, Jamestown, founded to make a profit, began using enslaved – or indentured labor. This was, some suggest, America’s “original sin.”***
 20. In Plymouth, 400 miles to the north, the Pilgrims sought religious freedom and a self-sustaining community. It was established in 1620, the second English colony. The climate

was colder, the soil rocky, farming difficult. With cash crops out, the Pilgrims fished and exported lumber. They built, among other things, ships. They were the industrialists.

21. Unlike Jamestown, they were dissenters of the Church of England, and independent. They wanted, above all else, freedom of conscience and the right to practice their faith without persecution.

22. By 1650, 50,000 colonists had migrated to North America. By 1700 it was a quarter of a million, and fifty years later, it was approaching 1.2 million.⁹³

23. Escalating tensions were frequent between natives, various Indian tribes, and new settlers pushing ever westward. **By the late 1730s and the early 1740s, preachers began to sound the alarm.** It was in this era when **Jonathan Edwards** preached to his own congregation the well-known sermon, fearing that they were **'sinners in the hands of an angry God.'**⁹⁴ No voice was louder than the Brit, George Whitefield. An estimated 80 percent of the colonialists heard him preach in person at least once from Savannah to New England. Conservatively, 12-15 percent of the population, some say as high as 20 percent, were spiritually renewed. 'This was America's first Great Awakening.'⁹⁵ It arguably changed the trajectory of the nation. It altered the cultural ethos. When Whitefield died in 1770, a few years before the Declaration of Independence, his name was the most recognized name in the colonies – more than Washington, Adams, Jefferson or Franklin. He had galvanized the colonies into a whole around a new identity – faith.

⁹³ See: <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-ushistory2os2xmaster/chapter/united-states-population-chart/>; See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographic_history_of_the_United_States.

⁹⁴ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinners_in_the_Hands_of_an_Angry_God; See also: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1053&context=etas>.

⁹⁵ See: <https://www.history.com/topics/european-history/great-awakening>; Also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Great_Awakening; and, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Great-Awakening>.

24. A ten-year investigation commissioned by the Supreme Court involved *a review of some 500 of our founding documents⁹⁶ reaching back to the days of Columbus.* This study was designed to discover the prevailing philosophy that informed the American Revolution. The court concluded, "... the case *assumes that we are a Christian people,* and the morality of the country is deeply engrafted upon Christianity ..." The case involved Pennsylvania, so also declared, "... the Christian religion is a part of the common law of Pennsylvania."
25. The court cited additional evidence: Oaths on the Bible that invoked God – to lie is to lie against God; political and private assemblies which open with a Christian invocation – gatherings of the people, public and private assume the presence of the invisible God, who is to be honored and respected, and who invisibly presides over all; the standard language of last wills and testaments, "In the name of God, Amen" – even the transfer of property, ownership of the land, finds a reference in the sovereign laws of God. *Sabbath laws directed the closure of courts and legislatures, offices and businesses on Sunday – thus what were called 'blue laws,' those rising from the force of Scripture. The Church law had equal force with state law;* but by a different means, a different source of authority. Not by judicial decree of legislative action, but by the force of faith and its influence. Abundant Christians churches and organizations with missionary activity and charitable enterprises under Christian banners were cities as proof that we were founded as a Christian nation, a place where those who had been persecuted as Protestants by the Catholic Church could now be free to worship un-

⁹⁶ This was conducted by the Supreme Court in association with *Holy Trinity Church v. United States*, a case dated February 29, 1892. *Vine & Fig Tree, The Supreme Court of the United States, Holy Trinity Church v. The United States* 143 U.S. 457, 12 S.Ct. 511, 36 L.Ed. 226 February 29, 1892, <http://members.aol.com/EndTheWall/TrinityHistory.htm>, retrieved August 26, 2007.

der new Bible-based reforms. And, where Catholics could be free as well, along with Jews. There are so many unofficial declarations of the nation's Christian roots. At the time of the research, there were forty-four states, and all of their constitutions referenced the Christian Worldview. **Even today, God-language, in some form, remains in every state constitution.**

26. "By our form of government, the Christian religion is the established religion; and all sects and denominations of Christians are placed upon equal footing, and they are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty."⁹⁷ And this, **"No free government now exists in the world, unless where Christianity is acknowledged, and is the religion of the country."**⁹⁸
27. Dr. Donald S. Lutz⁹⁹ is a professor of political philosophy at the University of Houston. He and his research associate, Dr. Charles Hyneman, conducted **a groundbreaking 10-year study published in The American Political Science Review. Some 15,000 documents of the 55 authors of the Constitution were examined**, including articles from newspapers and pamphlets, books and monographs. They found that **the Bible, specifically the book of Deuteronomy, constituted 34 percent of all the direct quotes of the Founders** in the formation of our founding documents.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ *Bible Law Course*, "Runkel v Winemiller," 4; "Harris & McHenry," 276 (Supreme Court: Maryland; October Term, 1799). <http://www.mosesand.com/studies/RvW.htm>, retrieved August 26, 2007.

⁹⁸ *The Founders' Constitution, Vol. 5, Amendment I* (Speech and Press): "Upgrade v. Commonwealth," 11; "Serg. & Rawle," 394 (The University of Chicago Press, 1824). http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/print_documents/amendI_speechs30.html, retrieved August 26, 2007.

⁹⁹ Dr. Donald S. Lutz is professor of political science at the University of Houston. He is author of *The Origins of American Constitutionalism* and *A Preface to American Political Theory*; editor of *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History*, and co-editor with Charles S. Hyneman of *American Political Writing During the Founding Era: 1760-1805*. For a review of the latter book, see George W. Carey's "Moral and Political Foundations of Order".

¹⁰⁰ William J. Federer, *American Minute*. See <http://www.amerisearch.net/>

Of 15,000 possible sources to inform the discussion, the one dominant source from which the founders drew their ideas and perspectives, their values and notions about liberty and responsibility, was the Bible. French philosopher Montesquieu was quoted 8.3 percent of the time, followed by English jurist William Blackstone and his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* 7.9 percent, and then English philosopher John Locke 2.9 percent.

28. In an even more astounding discovery, **while 34 percent of the quotes were directly from the pages of the Bible, another 60 percent were from men who had used the Bible to inform their conclusions.** Thus, ninety-four percent of the founding fathers quotes were based on the Bible, directly or indirectly. This nation was founded with a deep sense of reverence for God, and the moral laws of God.¹⁰¹ Lutz compiled a list of over 180 sources from which quotes were derived. That one-third came directly from the Scriptures, in the face of such diversity, is a staggering fact, one rarely noted today.¹⁰²
29. **When we look at the basis of English Law and the U. S. Constitution, we find the writings of William Blackstone,** and his commentaries which consolidated English common law into **a unified and rational system and represented the first comprehensive integration of a system of justice.** The multi-year project sold more copies in the colonies than England and had a profound impact on the formation of the U. S. Government. **Blackstone spoke of the “supreme being [who] formed the universe, and created matter out of nothing, [and] he impressed cer-**

index.php?date=2004-09-17, retrieved August 27, 2007.

¹⁰¹ Alliance for Life Ministries, “America’s Christian Heritage, Part II: The Revolution and Beyond”, http://www.alliance4lifemin.org/category..../ach_part2.htm, retrieved August 27, 2007.

¹⁰² EarsToHear.net, Stephen Voigt, “How I learned about the root of law...but not in law school”, December 22, 2005, <http://earstohear.net/Separation/rootoflaw.html>, retrieved August 27, 2007.

tain principles upon that matter, from which it can never depart, and without which it would cease to be..." He argued for 'self-government' of individuals as they reminded themselves of their created place of honor as God's noblest creature. "Man, considered as a creature, must necessarily be subject to the laws of his creator, for he is entirely a dependent being." The failure to observe the laws of the Creator and remain dependent upon Him, implied consequences, "... as man depends absolutely upon his maker for everything, it is necessary that he should in all points conform to his maker's will."

30. The "will of his maker is called," by Blackstone, "the law of nature." God, Blackstone argued, "endued him [man] with free will to conduct himself in all parts of life, he laid down certain immutable laws of human nature, whereby that free will is in some degree regulated and restrained, and gave him also the faculty of reason ..." Behind Blackstone, and the common law of Europe which the jurist codified, was the Bible, and the Creator, the God of the Bible. He called these principles, "... eternal, immutable laws of good and evil, to which the creator himself in all his dispensations conforms ... as they are necessary for the conduct of human actions."
31. Obedience to the law of God was an idea embraced by Americans until the mid-1880's, when Enlightenment notions gained ground that denied the reality of God and embraced an exalted view of man. Charles Finney, an attorney, found so many Biblical references in Blackstone's Commentaries that he purchased a Bible, read it, and became a believer, and of course, the great evangelist that impacted America in the Second Great Awakening. He was convicted and saved – reading Blackstone's Commentaries. Behind it, and English Common Law, was Scripture.
32. The U.S. Constitution was the product of a constitution-making tradition that reached back to the charters

of the original colonies as well as to the states, and from there, the tradition found roots in the biblical covenant itself. *In Jamestown, the first representative government met in their church building, and opened with prayer.* The guiding principles of governance were tempered and informed by Biblical values.

33. Similarly, *the Pilgrims enacted a 'Bill of Liberties,' a precedent to the Bill of Rights, drafted by a Pastor Nathaniel Ward, informed by Scripture.* When Connecticut was founded, it was a governmental structure fashioned largely *from a sermon based on Deut. 1:13 and Exodus 18:21, and from that sermon sprang the "Fundamental Orders of Connecticut."*¹⁰³
34. The colonists came to America with the Bible in their hand. And from the Scripture came their notions of natural law as the basis of the government. *Every right articulated in the Declaration of Independence had been discussed openly in the era before the Revolution,* and those discussions were led by the clergy and their preaching. The first great awakening awakened a sleeping and languishing church and made firebrands out of American pastors – who preached on the Biblical basis of government, a self-governed people whose morals were informed by conscience sharpened by Scripture. They preached on representative government, its limitations and powers, the balance of those powers. They preached on the tension between the minister and the magistrate.
35. David Barton suggests *a correlation behind the Declaration of Independence and a listing of sermon topics preached in the decades leading up to the revolution*, preaching that offered perspectives on public issues, taxes, education, the military, just and unjust wars, governance – these were ideas and in them ideals for nation building. It

¹⁰³ David Barton, "Building On Firm Foundations," *Ministries Today*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (January/February 2012: Charisma Media; Lake Mary, FL), 34-35.

was the clergy who were behind the revolution. *The British called them “The Black Regiment,” referring to their clerical robes, and they laid the blame for Colonial unrest on the backs of the preachers and the churches.* As a result, 10 of the 19 church buildings during the New York occupation were destroyed, and most of those in Virginia met the same fate.¹⁰⁴

36. They feared God. They revered the Scripture. *It would have been inconceivable to them, that in the future, their children’s children, thinking people, would have wrenched the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution along with the Bill of Rights free of their true roots, or attempted to understand it apart from the Scriptures over which they poured as they wrote the founding documents.* The people were free only because God was their king! They were free because his law had been written on their hearts, and they respected that law.
37. By 1784, not ten years after the Declaration of Independence, only a year after the guns had stopped firing and the Revolutionary War had ended, Thomas Brockaway, told his congregation, in a sermon now famous, *“Here (in America) then, God is erecting a stage on which to exhibit the great things of his kingdom.”*¹⁰⁵
38. *Washington, in his first inaugural address, spoke of “the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government”*¹⁰⁶ Poets chimed in, writing of the ‘rising glory’ of America, and a vision of ‘endless peace.’ This rag-tag band of outnumbered, under-trained, starving soldiers with inferior arms and ammunition shortages, had just defeated the most powerful empire on the planet. Everyone knew it was a miracle.

¹⁰⁴ David Barton, “Building On Firm Foundations,” *Ministries Today*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (January/February 2012: Charisma Media; Lake Mary, FL), 34-35.

¹⁰⁵ Anders Stephanson, 19.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

39. Washington wrote to General Nathanael Greene on February 6, 1783, shortly after the conflict had ended, “*It will not be believed that such a force as Great Britain has employed for eight years in this country could be baffled in their plan of subjugating it* by numbers infinitely less, composed of men oftentimes half starved; always in rags, without pay, and experiencing, at times, every species of distress which human nature is capable of undergoing.”¹⁰⁷ The difference – God’s hand.
40. On November 2, 1783, Washington wrote, “*The singular interpositions of Providence in our feeble condition were such, as could scarcely escape the attention of the most unobserving...*” The Armies of the colonialists, he said, with unparalleled perseverance “through almost every possible suffering and discouragement for the space of eight years, was little short of a standing miracle.” Indeed.¹⁰⁸
41. Washington’s protégé, David Humphrey, a writer, would observe, “*All former empires rose, the work of guilt, on conquest, blood* or usurpation built; But we taught wisdom ... *Our constitutions form’d on freedom’s base*, which all the blessings of all lands embrace...”¹⁰⁹ The new empire would be like none before – exceptional. A nation of laws – where law, not a dictator, was the king, and even the king was subject to the law.
42. Even after his term as President, Jefferson wrote, “*We are destined* to be a barrier against the returns of ignorance and barbarism. Old Europe,” he wrote, prophetically, “will have to lean on our shoulders, and to hobble along by our side... *What a colossus shall we be...*”¹¹⁰
43. Daniel Webster, in 1802, believed that *the American Revolution was a ‘miracle,’* unlike anything that had ever

¹⁰⁷ William Federer, *Who is the King* ..., p. 26.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Anders Stephanson, 19.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 20.

happened in human history – that is astounding. “Hold on to the Constitution,” he urged, “for if the American Constitution should fail, there will be anarchy throughout the world.”¹¹¹

44. Simply put, these colonists had a ‘fear’ of God. They knew that their victory was not by their own numbers or strength. They had a reverence for God, and that allowed liberty and freedom to exist, to flourish. Now, in the absence of that fear, the liberty of free but evil men to speak and do as they please has become a threat to all. More to the point, the culture is mentoring the Church in its dismissal of reverence for God. It affects our prayer life. We no longer believe we are ‘sinners in the hands of an angry God.’ That perception sparked the first Great Awakening and became a shared cultural value in the formation of the nation. No more!
45. Montesquieu, in the 1800s, postulated that republics could not retain their political character as agents of conquest. Doing so would violate their constitutional nature and contradict their essence – and any top-down conquest then would violate the spirit of their own founding. The idea presented a dilemma – as it does today. A free people cannot enslave another, an issue at the heart of our national sin, one over which we fought our bloodiest war. They may defend themselves, but they will not be the aggressors.
46. As the war with England came to an end, Benjamin West, an American painter, had been engaged to do a portrait of King George III. The king casually asked America what George Washington planned to do, having led the fledgling nation to a stunning victory. West replied, “They say he will return to his farm.” The English king was shocked. “If he does that,” he declared, “he will be the greatest man in the world.”¹¹² Something was different about America than any other na-

¹¹¹ Federer, *Who Is The King ...*, p. 13.

¹¹² Ibid ..., p. 27.

- tion. After Washington served two terms, he retired from office. He set a precedent, by not being carried away by power.
47. The *separation of church and state* metaphor, which occurred first, *not in the constitution*, but in a letter from Jefferson, was *noted only twice in 150 years* of Supreme Court history. Then, in 1947, a court beginning to lean left, in *Everson v. Board of Education*, ruled, “The First Amendment has erected a wall of separation between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach.”¹¹³ Fifteen years later, the national roof, with regard to faith in the public square, began to collapse. Religious activities, expressions and symbols, common for two centuries, began to be removed. A war on faith and people of faith was launched, and it has not relented.
48. The *Everson*, 1947 ruling passed by a majority of one – a 5-4 vote. In 1962, the *Engel v. Vitale*, on prayer, was a 6-1 ruling, with two justices abstaining. *Five men, then six, changed the nation and shut out public faith exercises* – because, while the issue before the court was narrow, in both instances, its symbolism was sweeping. It was the public introduction of a national experiment to reshape the culture around another narrative, a different set of values, humanistic moralism.
49. All, on the back of this language, “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”¹¹⁴ *If Congress makes the law, why then was the court writing its own law? And in doing so, prohibiting ‘the free expression’ of religion?* The amendment had been a prohibition against the establishment of a national church, of - Anglicans, Congregationalists, Unitarians, Presbyterians, Quakers and the like.

¹¹³ *County of Allegheny v. American Civil Liberties Union*, A Supreme Court Ruling.

¹¹⁴ The First Amendment of the Constitution.

No one church would be favored. States, however, could sponsor a favored church, and many did – past the time of the Revolution. Thus, the Court displaced the legislature and invented the idea of a ‘living constitution’ with hidden meanings, rights and restrictions that it alone could interpret. Judicial activism now threatens the balance of powers, imposing tyrannical rules on the people, the Court, a council of legal tyrants – kings who decree law.

50. Justice Story would write, “We are not to attribute this [First Amendment] prohibition of a national religious establishment to an indifference to religion in general, and especially Christianity (which, [he added] none could hold in more reverence than the Framers of the Constitution)...at the time of the adoption of the Constitution... *The universal sentiment in America was that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the State... An attempt to level all religions and to make it a matter of state policy to hold all in utter indifference would have created universal disapprobation* [disapproval] if not universal indignation...”¹¹⁵
51. In 1853-1854, the House and Senate Judiciary Committee, reported, “*Had the people, during the Revolution, had a suspicion of any attempt to war against Christianity, that Revolution would have been strangled in its cradle.* At the time of the adoption of the Constitution and the amendments, the universal sentiment was that Christianity should be encouraged, not any one sect [denomination]... In this age there can be no substitution for Christianity; that is, in its general principles, the great conservative element on which we must rely for the purity and permanence of free institutions. That was the religion of the Founders of the Republic, and they expected it to remain the religion of their descendants.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ David Barton, *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution, and Religion* (Aledo, TX: Wallbuilder Press, 1996, 2002), 29-30.

¹¹⁶ Barton, 30. Quoting the House and Judiciary Committee of the 1853-1854 term.

52. The point being, as Justice Story would write in his *Commentaries*, **the purpose was not to 'prostrate Christianity' or to promote pluralism** – the equality of all religions, but to exclude, at the national level, rivalry between various Christian sects and denominations.¹¹⁷
53. In 1833, Justice Joseph Story, in *Commentaries on the Constitution*, declared that **"the purpose of the First Amendment was not to discredit the then existing state establishments of religion,** but rather **"to exclude from the national government all power to act on the subject."**¹¹⁸ Story was appointed to the Court by James Madison, who introduced the First Amendment. He served on the Court for 34 years. He knew the Framers' intent. And so did the Justices, who in 1947, and 1962, and in subsequent years, went off the rails with their theory of the Constitution as a living, evolving document which they alone had the wisdom to interpret. Sadly, they deeply wounded the nation, and the verdict is still out, as to whether we will recover. They are guilty of judicial treason, and we, of silence.
54. **Civil law focuses on the act** – until recently, when hate became a crime. This is due to the disdain for faith as a foundation. **Christianity focuses, not only on the act, but the underlying motive,** the condition of the heart, hate and anger, the need for forgiveness and love. Pushing the church into the shadows, the state now sees the vacuum it created, but rather than move back to the Founder's posture of an affirmed church separate from the state, the state has begun to become the church. There is a problem, **the constitution was made for a moral people.** No law, no civil constraint, can change the heart. External force is not enough. Both Franklin and Jefferson, two supposed champions of secularism, believed that only Christianity with its principles and power to change hearts could serve

¹¹⁷ Barton, 31.

¹¹⁸ Federer, 85.

that purpose.¹¹⁹

55. There was to be no national church. That is the idea meant by the phrase, an ‘established church.’ In each colony, the arrangement was often different. In many cases, one denomination dominated. Its roots were in the faith that was central to the foundation of the colonies. That one brand of Christianity was often dominant and favored. **In at least nine of the thirteen colonies, there was an ‘established church.’**¹²⁰ That was not to be true for the nation, though, in some cases, it was true for particular colonies. **The concern was that they would not have here,** what they had fled from in Britain, the Church of England, which was **one church for everyone, and all others persecuted.** Colonies, and subsequently, states, raised funds for the established church, and clergy – and at times, sadly, worked to prevent another denomination or brand in that region. Non-established, off-brand churches might function, but not with state favor or funding. That led, ultimately, very soon after the Revolution, to a position of favor to all Christian denominations, without state funding.

56. Public schools were established with moral education in mind. The “Old Deluder Satan Law” that passed in the Massachusetts colony in 1642, and in Connecticut in 1647, ordered that settlements of fifty families or more needed a school. The purpose? To prevent the abuse of power that could be imposed on Biblically-illiterate people. One of the chief projects of “that old deluder Satan,” they believed, was “to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures.” The schools would teach the Bible and its principles, being the first textbook, along with reading and writing. In 1690, Connecticut passed a law regarding the English language being taught to children, so that those who could not read

¹¹⁹ Barton, 33.

¹²⁰ Fisher, *Black Robe Regiment*, 342.

- English, might be able “to read the holy Word of God.”¹²¹
57. Almost all the first schools were in this sense, Bible schools. In 1636, Harvard declared, “Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life...” That was Harvard. ***Christ was, at Harvard, “the only foundation*** of all sound knowledge and learning... seeing the Lord only gives wisdom...”¹²² As late as 1790, Harvard rules demanded that all students, whatever degree program they might be pursuing, “attend the worship of God in the chapel, morning and evening...”¹²³ The slogans of Harvard, “For the Glory of Christ,” and “For Christ and the Church.”
58. ***William and Mary were founded (1692) “that the Christian faith may be propagated...*** to the glory of Almighty God.” In 1792, students were still required to attend chapel. Yale, founded in 1699, by ten ministers, was to “propagate in this wilderness the blessed reformed Protestant religion.” In 1701, Scriptures were read morning and evening and students had times of prayer. In 1746, Princeton was established with the requirement that “every student shall attend worship in the college hall morning and evening.”¹²⁴
59. In recent years, we have been plagued by a socialist-communist tactic called ‘deconstruction’ that seeks to separate people from their past, with a disdain for their history, often by emphasizing the ugly side of its national record, to create neutrality, a sense of differentiation and even shame, and from a posture of supposed objective neutrality, to move the nation to revolutionary grounds. This is a form of collective brainwashing often articulated by supposed scholars.
60. America is not perfect. But pause for a moment and consid-

¹²¹ Barton, 81.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 82-83.

er the parade of various regimes and dictators throughout history. From 1960-1992, Peru's Shining Path Revolution took the lives of 100,000 of its people. From 1966-1975, 1.1 million were killed under Yakubu Gowon in Nigeria. From 1948-1994, 1.6 million were killed by Kim Il Sung in North Korea – and that dictatorship continues, now armed with a nuclear weapon. From 1945-1969, Ho Chi Minh and his revolution in Vietnam claimed 1.7 million lives. Mengistu Haile Mariam presided over the deaths of 2 million Ethiopians, from 1977-1991. Cambodia, under the terror created by Pol Pot, from 1963-1977, saw 2.4 million needless deaths. From 1941-1948, Prime Minister of Japan, Hideki Tojo, watched 4 million die in Asia as a result of Japanese aggression and conflict. Turkey erupted in violence early in the last century, from 1908-1918, under the leadership of Enver Pasha, with 2.5 million losing their lives. Vladimir Lenin's leadership in creating the USSR, and the persecution he unleashed on his own people, resulted in 4 million deaths. Stalin followed, from 1922-1953, claiming an additional 60 million. Pakistan/Bangladesh erupted in 1969-1971, in the Vietnam era, and that conflict, under Yahya Khan took 12 million lives. Adolph Hitler left a trail of blood over most of Europe, reducing it to rubble, with a claim on 17 million lives, 6 million of whom were Jews, along with many conservative Christians, and a shameful legacy of concentration camps. From 1949-1976, Mao Zedong led a revolution in China that took the lives of 80 million. ***Take a breath – all the above was in the last century – that's 184 million people.*** In the year 2000, only four nations on the face of the earth had a larger population than that number. Imagine a war that took out every person in, for example, in Brazil or Russia, comparable populations. This is a number equal to the total populations of 126 nations, counting up from the least populated, as of the year 2000. If whole nations had been eliminated,

of 224 global nations, only 103 – barely a hundred - would have been left with people. No century has known such a toll on human life, reckless wars, genocides or dictators. All the while, America continued to wave its flag, celebrate thanksgiving and Christmas, go to church and eat apple pie. The nation is not perfect, but it is blessed.

61. In centuries previous to ours, terror has reigned in various parts of the world. Napoleon ravaged Europe, killing 6 million. Tamerlane, a Turco-Mongol conqueror who founded the Timurid Empire in Central Asia, from 1370-1405, put 17 million to death. Genghis Khan was responsible for 30 million lives in the same region, Central Asia, from 1206-1227. **No one, however, has come close to the 240 million killed, and the additional 180 million enslaved, since the rise of Islam in 622 AD. They have averaged 171,000 deaths annually for 1400 years – what bloodshed!** And from a ‘peaceful religion.’ It is politically incorrect to mention this – but, you need to know.
62. The rise of global Islam fits the profile of global hostility to Jews and Christians more than anything we have seen. The London Daily Express on October 15, 2009, quoted Anjem Choudry, an Islamic leader in the UK, who expressed his impatience with the three stage model of national transformation – 1) Be people of peace, 2) Gain access to power and a platform to speak, strategic positioning is important, 3) Feign weakness or persecution and demand concessions as the first step to complete Islamic domination. For some, the multi-decadal process is too long. America is now in Stage II. England is further along. Choudry, in the Daily Express, gave voice to many Muslims. **“We have had enough of democracy and man-made law ... We will call for a complete upheaval of the British ruling system ... and demand full implementation of Sharia in Britain.”**¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Bill Federer, *Who Is The King...*, 25.

63. Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State, spoke at the Bicentennial Celebration of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. The date was December 22, 1820. "There is," he said, "a sort of genius of the place which ... awes us. We feel that we are on the spot where the first scene of history was laid; where the hearths and altars of New England were first placed; where Christianity and civilization... made their first lodgement..." He suggested their tentative and speculative hopes, "If God prosper us ... we shall begin a work which shall last for ages ... we shall fill this region of the very great continent ... with civilization and Christianity."¹²⁶ **Civilization – the civil side, the government; and Christianity – the sacred side, the church. Together.** A carefully balanced tether. Webster declared, "Our ancestors established their system of government on morality and religious sentiment... Whatever makes men good Christians, makes them good citizens."¹²⁷
64. **The Founders wrestled with the idea of power and authority,** the nature of governance, and they looked at a variety of government models and systems. They traced power from the Creator – Genesis 1:28. They believed all authority was from God (Romans 13:1), even civil authority. That power flows from the Creator, from God to kings, and then to the people. But sadly, that top-down model had given rise to despotism. Could the equation be different? Could the power flow from the Creator to people – to Adam, first as a man, and then to his children, who would represent him and God in the earth? Does God invest His authority in simple men who give permission for representative governance, never surrendering their autonomy or rights, having the authority to revoke or recall the representative ruler – their servant. **This was no academic exercise.** It was not theoretical. Dr. Marshall Foster of the

¹²⁶ Bill Federer, *Who Is The King...*60.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Mayflower Institute, observed, “400 years ago the conflict between tyranny and liberty was red hot... When King James died in 1625, his son Charles I ascended to the throne with the arrogance of a Roman emperor. He was the quintessential ‘divine right’ monarch. He declared martial law and suspended the rights of the individual... [his] inquisitors... in the tower of London used torture techniques to ‘discover the taxpayer’s assets...” On January 30, 1637, as settlers were arriving on America’s shores, King Charles had three well-known prisoners in the pillory – a Puritan minister, a Christian writer, and a doctor, John Bastwick. Huge crowds had gathered. Their crime? They had written pamphlets disagreeable to the king’s religious views. Before the crowd, their foreheads were branded with the letters, SL, for Seditious Libel.¹²⁸ England was not a safe place for religious freethinkers. Tens of thousands began to think the unthinkable – they would leave England and follow the Pilgrims to the New World. Within a decade, the exodus had begun. In a 16-year period, 20,000 Puritans came to the New World and settled in Massachusetts, under the leadership of John Winthrop. This is our beginning – our almost forgotten history.¹²⁹ Now we too are facing intolerance. Where do *we* go? There is no new land to be discovered and settled – our call is to see a Spiritual Awakening, it is our only hope.

65. Winthrop would write, *A Model of Christian Charity*, June 11, 1630. This was the pattern. These were thinking folks, deeply religious, and they bound themselves together in written covenants. “We are a Company, professing ourselves fellow members of Christ, we ought to account ourselves knit together by this bond of love ... by mutual consent through a special overruling of Providence.” Together, they would seek and find a place of habitation and

¹²⁸ Federer, 64.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 65.

establish a “***form of government both civil and ecclesiastical...***” – the state and the church, in a dynamic, balanced union. This was not a cold agreement. Winthrop wrote, “We must delight in each other, make one another’s condition our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together... as members of the same body. So shall we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...” And notice the Biblical theme of Israel, “We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when He shall make us a praise and glory that men of succeeding plantations shall say, ‘The Lord make it like that of New England.’” We will be, he declared, with the now famous line that Ronald Reagan resurrected, “as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us...”¹³⁰ For a fledgling colony that had fled their homeland and landed in a wilderness, this was a stunning prophetic declaration of faith in God and their undertaking. Such excerpts from our history are almost forgotten.

66. Other ***pastors were founders of colonies*** as well. We forget. ***Thomas Hooker founded Hartford*** in 1636; ***Roger Williams founded Providence*** in the same year. ***John Wheelwright founded Exeter, New Hampshire*** in 1638; and ***John Lothrop founded Barnstable, Mass.***, in 1639. Lothrop, arrested and imprisoned, lost his wife while incarcerated, leaving his children to beg on the streets. Released, he was bound for the New World. Arriving, he declared his delight at finding neither a bishop nor a king. He was free.
67. ***America became the world’s lifeboat.*** First, the pilgrims and the Puritans. Then almost every brand of Protestantism. Then Catholics. The Spanish-Portuguese Sephardic Jews, and Germanic Jews. Then, monotheists. Then spurious groups. The polytheists. Pagans. Finally, atheists, and militant Muslims. Then criminals and drug dealers, murderers and gangs – defying our borders, and pillaging cit-

¹³⁰ Federer, 65.

ies. Up until a few decades ago, we did well. We remained solid at the core – Americans, with a Christian heritage, Judeo-Christian values. Then, the core began to disintegrate. Its ideas were challenged. Its founders turned into racists. Its founding faith exiled from the public square. Every minority group and exotic idea or doctrine mainstreamed. Suddenly, the nation that was tolerant, was no longer tolerant – it had poisoned its own well.

68. *Tolerance works, but pluralism does not.* The colonists were 98 percent Protestant. Catholics found a home in Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York. The colonies majored on freedom of conscience – not brand. Although, nine of the 13 colonies had faith requirements for office holders, and a number had established churches.

69. *In the Colonial era, it became the role of clergy to mentor magistrates* in the nature of their duties – the line between liberty and licentiousness, tyranny and arbitrary power. This was done with Election Day sermons, when new representatives, following an election, were seated. Ministers addressed them – they were the experts on church and state. They preached to their congregations their duty in honoring and obeying magistrates. They articulated the rights of a free people and the responsibilities of their elected representatives.¹³¹ We can hardly imagine such an arrangement. The opposite would more likely be true.

70. *It was the clergy*, who, after being stirred from their slumber by the likes of George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Jonathan Mayhew, and so many other voices in the late 1730s and into the decade of the 1740s, who were now awakened, and ***preaching on the limitations of government, defining godly government, limited submission and resistance to higher powers.*** They articulated, from Scripture, Samuel

¹³¹ Thomas Jacobson, *Fire at the Founding*, (West Chester, OH: GLC Publications, 2020), 6.

Rutherford's 1644 thesis,¹³² that *the law was to be the king* (Lex Rex), whereas, the king had been the law (Rex Lex). No, there was, Rutherford argued, no 'divine right of a king.' Instead, there was another lawgiver – and that was God. Thus, the images of Moses on the Supreme Court. It was the church that informed an uninformed society about Biblical rights and moral duties, and their obligation to stand up to tyranny, and to balance civil and sacred authority.¹³³

71. *These preachers preached in state houses, election day sermons* – that is, during the first few days of a newly installed house of elected representatives, ministers would preach 'election day' sermons. They would, as did Samuel West, a pastor in Dartmouth, who preached before the State House of Representatives of the colony of Massachusetts-Bay, May 29, 1776. Only a few weeks before the Declaration of Independence, he told the law makers, "(I) t is part of *the work and business of a gospel minister to teach his hearers the duty they owe to magistrates*. . . [to] explain the nature of their duty faithfully and show them the difference between liberty and licentiousness." He continued saying, ministers were to animate lawmakers "to oppose tyranny and arbitrary power" and "inculcate upon them the duty of yielding due obedience to lawful author-

¹³² *Lex, Rex* was the title of a controversial and ultimately banned book by the Scottish Presbyterian pastor, The subtitle was, "The Law and the Prince." The book set forth the idea of the rule of law, and challenged the divine right of kings, arguing that even kings were subject to the law. Thus, the government was limited. Wars must be just. There were, according to Rutherford, "Two Kingdoms," the domain of the Church and that of the State. These were distinct realms. Rutherford argued from Scripture, Natural Law and Scottish law. He opposed "royal absolutism" and emphasized "covenant and the rule of law." Rutherford was charged by the state for high treason. He died before he could be executed. His books were publicly burned, and those in possession of a copy were considered traitors. Rutherford's voice and book, *Lex, Rex*, was "a precursor to the social contract idea, and helped pave the way for the political theory of John Locke." Locke did not, however, share Rutherford's views on Church-State relations. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lex,_Rex.

¹³³ Ibid.

ity.” It was clergy, West believed, who thoroughly studied the “law of nature, the rights of mankind, and the reciprocal duties of governors and governed.” The concern of West, and the voices of clergy, were to be a guard against the extreme of “slavish submission to tyrants on one hand, and of sedition and licentiousness on the other.”¹³⁴

72. For over a century, the voices of clergy have been increasingly silenced, with regard to the soul of the nation, and a rising sentiment that has advanced a reverse interpretation of the first amendment and obscured historical facts. The Johnson Amendment, in 1954, had a chilling effect on clergy, threatening to withdraw tax exempt status from those who spoke out on political issues. Clergy, and much of the conservative church, had already developed a ‘fortress’ mentality coupled with an escapist eschatology. Why engage a world that would be given over to the Antichrist. The inevitable could not be prevented. Evangelical churches became places of refuge, contrasted with the earlier prophetic role, of being salt and light.

73. **The tax exempt status of the church was not a gift bestowed on it by a benevolent government. The church was recognized as a separate sovereign entity,** directly under the auspices of the government of God Himself. That is a shocking idea for secularists. As recently as 1970, in *Walz v. Tax Commission*, and *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, Chief Justice Warren Burger, countering the argument that tax exemption for churches was the first stage toward a state church, and the establishment thereof, noted that such a charge had no standing, given our 200 years of universal practice going back to the colonial era.¹³⁵ The driving motivation for many who came to these

¹³⁴ Samuel West, “A Sermon Preached before the Honorable Council and the Honorable House of Representatives of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay in New England.” May 29, 1776. This was the anniversary of the election of the house members. Printed in, *Pulpit of the American Revolution*, Excerpt from pp. 320-321 of 259-322.

¹³⁵ Fisher, *Black Robe Regiment*, 349.

shores was for religious freedom. The financial subjugation of these churches was, therefore, unthinkable.

74. In George Washington's Farewell Address, he cautioned the nation: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness – these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens." We have taken the opposite tact. Religion, in the modern era, is optional. Religion and morality are no longer conjoined – every man fashions his own moral script, writes his own values. But *to Washington, to claim to be a 'patriot' and 'subvert' religion – the Christian religion, and its moral framework, was impossible.* Such a man was not a patriot, but a traitor. He would say, 'the politician' and the 'pious' should 'respect and cherish' faith and its moral framework. The private practice of virtue and public liberty balanced with constraint, was out of faith and its practice. "Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation deserts the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice?" If those, taking oaths, and filling the seats of public power, are void of faith and its values, if the oaths are disconnected from their roots – from an obligation to God. If we fail to see that the office, that authority itself is sacred, and also a province that God governs – where does the politician's power then stop? What constrains him? What stops him from confiscating property, restricting liberty, taking lives? Continuing Washington argued, "And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion." Despite "the influence of refined education on minds... reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."¹³⁶ Stunning.

¹³⁶ George Washington, "Farewell Address, September 17, 1796." *A Com-*

75. Samuel Langdon, preached to the Congress of the Massachusetts-Bay Colony in 1775, one year before the Declaration of Independence. "We must keep our eyes fixed on the supreme government of the Eternal King, as directing all events, setting up or pulling down the kings of the earth at His pleasure." **This idea that God was king and every man subject to him, and his laws, producing a godly people, was at the heart of colonial thinking.** Langdon charged, "the best forms of human government... degenerate and go to ruin by corruption." The "decayed constitutions of kingdoms and states," he advocated, could be renewed by "reviving public virtue and religion, and granting the favorable interpositions of His providence."¹³⁷
76. **The idea of God, as King of the nation, is behind the idea of inalienable rights.** There is no other source. If the government grants rights, they can rescind such rights. Liberty and rights from God, cannot be rescinded, however, they also reference a moral framework. The Founders spoke of such rights as endowed by our Creator – the complete basis for our nation is bound up in this idea of the Sovereign God.
77. An American magistrate loyal to King George III sent a letter to the British Board of Trade saying, **"If you ask an American who is his master? He will tell you he has none, nor any governor but Jesus Christ..."** it is my firm opinion, that the opposition..." to British regulations, and governance "of this country, is a determined preposition of the idea of total independence."¹³⁸
78. **The Pilgrims, on November 11, 1620, at Cape Cod, signed the Mayflower Compact** declaring **their purpose,**

pilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, by James Richardson (Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1910), George Washington, 1:205-216.

¹³⁷ Samuel Langdon, "Government Corruption by Vice, and Recovered by Righteousness," A sermon delivered to the Congress of Massachusetts-Bay, Wednesday, May 31, 1775. *Pulpit of the American Revolution*, p. 238, excerpted from 227-258.

¹³⁸ Dan Fisher, *Bringing Back the Black Robed Regiment* (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing, 2025), 45.

*“In the name of God... We, whose names are underwritten ... **Having taken for the Glory of God the Advancement of the Christian Faith...**”* – They created a base for the propagation of the gospel to the ends of the earth. Seven years before the Declaration of Independence and 149 years after the Mayflower Compact, Amos Adams, on April 6, 1769, would say in the midst of a ‘general fast,’ a day called in New England to seek God, one incumbent on all citizens, that early settlers, had ‘groaned’ under the weight of “inhibited worship of God, according to the light of their own consciences” and for that reason they left their “native country, to plant themselves in this howling wilderness. It was this abridgement of the rights of conscience...” he said, that “mightily assisted in the settlement of this country.” And that ‘oppression’ and the subsequent settlement of North America has proven to be “a great blessing to the world ... and a glorious enlargement of the kingdom of the Redeemer.” It is a ‘curse’ turned into a ‘blessing.’ This was a common view in the era of the nation’s founding – God, Providence, as they would say, the hand of Consummate Wisdom, had guided the nation.¹³⁹

79. Today, we are crossing lines that the Founders had drawn clearly – moral attitudes and dispositions were the responsibility of the church, to, by scriptural teaching, have a populace with informed consciences; and actions were the domain of the state. Murder, punitive by the state, was first addressed by the church – a call to love, a prohibition against hate. Theft was punishable by the state, but it was the church who inculcated the values, “Do not covet.” *Without the underlying values in place, the moral law, the law of the heart, the state could not stop the tidal wave of bad behavior.* Only a godly people could exist as a free and self-governed people. An ungodly people, with no moral tethering, would need a strong governmental hand.

¹³⁹ Jacobson, 27.

Now, the state is attempting to deal with ‘hate crimes,’ it has crossed the line, being now, the conscience keeper of the nation. Such moral tyranny is what the settlers fled to the nation to avoid. The sword of the Spirit was, indeed, a sword, but it was not an instrument of force, but of spirit, of persuasion, of inner conviction. The magistrate, in contrast, carried the sword of force. Without the free voice of the church in a culture – tyranny reigns by lawlessness, by unrestrained godlessness and its fruit – theft, murder, sedition, fornication and adultery, the throwing off of covenant and fidelity. Or, by the heavy hand of a tyrant, who in the absence of the law as king, God’s law, righteous laws (Lex Rex), then, becomes the king who makes the law himself, thus, dictatorship (Rex Lex). In the words of Samuel West, in his 1776 sermon to the officials of the Massachusetts-Bay Colony, “Deity is our supreme magistrate.”¹⁴⁰ Not England, its king or parliament, nor the gathering to whom he spoke. God was the king. This was the conviction shared throughout the colonies, and by the Founders. It was tolerance, but not pluralism. It was the separation of church and state, but not by a wall.

80. John Leland (1754-1841), a Baptist pastor, wrote, “The Rights of Conscience Inalienable, and therefore Religious Opinions not recognizable by Law.” He would assert, ***the word “conscience” signified common science, a court judicate which the Almighty has erected in every human breast:*** a censor morum over all his conduct. Conscience will ever judge right, when it is rightly informed; and speak truth when it understands it ...” Leland, from the Founding era, gives us insight into the nature of the thinking about ‘inalienable rights’ and ‘conscience.’ Every man would stand before God, and it was in his interest, to live in a way, with that day of reckoning in mind – his life and his conscience, an informed and godly conscience, were

¹⁴⁰ Jacobson, 35.

to be constantly reconciled. This inner sanctum where the finger of God drew a line in the hearts of men from His divine court, was not to be violated surrender to a king or even to a priest or pastor. Every man was to live from this sacred inner center. For Leland, the human mind, our thoughts, were “sacred to God.” And despite our moral depravity, there was still in us, a sacred voice, lines between right and wrong. Open to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the light of scriptures, conscience would speak clearly and truthfully.¹⁴¹ Leland wrote under a pseudonym in *The Yankee Spy*, and he sought to point out to pastors, legislative members and the public the *line between sin and crimes. The state, he charged, is tasked with crime and its punishments, and the church, with issues of sin, motives and the heart. Moral evil is a matter for the church, and that is why the clear and unrestrained voice of the pulpit is critical to a healthy nation.* Crimes are unchecked sins – but the state does not judge one for sin, for attitude and disposition, but for criminal acts.¹⁴² Inner persuasion – that is the voice of God and the work of the pastor; the force of penalty, control, if necessary, incarceration, is the responsibility of the state.¹⁴³ The care of souls cannot belong to the office of the civil magistrate, but to the church.¹⁴⁴

81. By 1780, in the midst of the difficult and prolonged Revolutionary War, the nation seemed to lapse into a moral slump. Simon Howard, before the Council and House of Representatives of the State of Massachusetts-Bay, sounded an alarm. It “concerns all of us to fear God,” reminding the Assembly, that the greater concern, was not England’s forces, of British General Thomas Gage, but God. He called these political leaders “to be men of truth, hating

¹⁴¹ Jacobson, 36-37.

¹⁴² Ibid, 42.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 50.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 50.

covetousness.” He warned, “The low and declining state of religion and virtue among us is too obvious not to be seen, and of too threatening an aspect not to be lamented, by all lovers of God and their country.” He pointed then to what they could not do, only by their example, “*It is not in the power of the best government to make impious, profligate people happy...* we may,” he warned, despite the best efforts of the war and of government, “undo ourselves by our vices.” These are the quarters, he noted, from which “our greatest danger arises. That spirit of infidelity, selfishness, luxury and dissipation.” It is more formidable, more threatening “than all the arms of our enemies.” And then he made a bold and impassioned assertion: “*Would we but reform our evil ways,* humble ourselves under the corrections, and be thankful for the mercies of Heaven; revive that piety and public spirit, that temperance and frugality, which have entailed immortal honor on the memory of our renowned ancestors; *we might, then, putting our trust in God, humbly hope that our public calamities would be soon at an end,* our independence established, our rights and liberties secured, and glory, peace and happiness dwell in our land. Such happy effects to the public might be expected from a general reformation.”¹⁴⁵

82. In 1950, President Harry Truman, “The fundamental basis of this nation’s laws [America] was given to Moses on the Mount... *If we don’t have a proper fundamental moral background, we will finally end up with a totalitarian government* which does not believe in rights for anybody except for the state.”¹⁴⁶
83. In 1984, Professors Donald Lutz and Charles Hyneman wrote, “The Relative Influence of European Writers on

¹⁴⁵ Simeon Howard, Pastor of the West Church, Boston, A sermon preached May 31, 1780, before the State Representatives of Massachusetts, the anniversary of their election – an election-day sermon, so-called. From *Pulpit of the American Revolution*, 395.

¹⁴⁶ Federer, *Who is the King ...*, 124.

Late 18th-Century American Political Thought” (American Political Science Review, 1984). They reviewed **15,000 documents written by the 55 men who wrote the US Constitution**, 39 of whom signed it. They reviewed newspapers, articles, pamphlets, monographs, books, and the sources that they quoted. What were they thinking about, writing about – apart from the constitution, and what and who was influencing their thinking? Montesquieu, Blackstone, Locke, Hume, Plutarch, Beccaria, etc. **The most often quoted source by the 55 men who deliberated together, and wrote the US Constitution, was the Bible** – especially, the book of Deuteronomy, the book of the law. Nothing else came close.¹⁴⁷

84. On April 26, 1777, *John Adams* wrote to Americans in the future, “**Posterity, you will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom.**” In 1864, B. F. Morris wrote, “The ministers of the Revolution were, like their Puritan predecessors, bold and fearless ... **No class of men contributed more to carry forward the Revolution and to achieve our independence than did the ministers.**... [B]y their prayers, patriotic sermons, and services [they] rendered the highest assistance to the civil government, the army and the country.”¹⁴⁸ John Adams noted, “The pulpits have thundered.”¹⁴⁹ The American Quarterly Register, in 1833, declared, “As a body of men, the clergy were preeminent in their attachment to liberty. The pulpits of the land rang with the notes of freedom.”¹⁵⁰
85. Historian Carl Bridenbaugh, declared, “**The American Revolution occurred in a religious atmosphere.**”¹⁵¹
86. **The British troops** were brutal to the colonialists, but es-

¹⁴⁷Federer, *Who is the King ...*, 124.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted by Fisher, *Black Robe Regiment*, 75.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 113.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 76.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 113.

pecially to Non-Anglican clergy and their churches. They **burned churches from the Carolinas to New England**. At the Old South Meeting House in Boston, they “ripped out the pews, and installed a bar in the first balcony and used Old South, as a riding school for the British Calvary.”¹⁵² Throughout the colonies, churches, places of worship, “sacred, magnificent, and costly structures, destroyed by fire, and leveled,” used from storage, theaters, for profane purposes – as spite to the Colonialists. This galvanized common people on behalf of the Revolution. Failing to win their civil freedom, they saw only repression and the loss of religious liberty.¹⁵³

87. **The Fathers, John Wingate Thornton noted, “did not divorce politics and religion,”** but they denounced the separation as ungodly. Indeed, the clergy were generally consulted by the civil authorities; and not infrequently the suggestions from the pulpit, on election days and other special occasions, were enacted into laws. The state was developed out of the church... our Fathers ever began their civil year and its responsibilities with an appeal to Heaven and recognized Christian morality as the only basis of good laws.”¹⁵⁴

88. Historian James Adams wrote, “Freedom was not born a bastard. It was birthed in blood during the American Revolution, when church and state were still married. Separation would come later. **The Founding Fathers called only for separation – not divorce.** Only in the latter half of this century (1900s), has the United States Supreme Court held that church and state should be legally divorced. As a result of having its religious roots cut out from under it, freedom currently suffers from an identity crisis.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Quoted by Fisher, *Black Robe Regiment*, 132.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 133.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 278.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 273.

89. Samuel Adams warned, *“If ever a time should come, when vain and aspiring men shall possess the highest seats in Government, our country will stand in need of its experienced patriots to prevent its ruin.”*¹⁵⁶ That time may be now.
90. A part of our problem is a shift in semantics. In our era, religion is a set of beliefs regarding causation, the nature and purpose of the universe, or of meaning itself. It is broad and sweeping, as philosophical as scientific or theological. But, in the era of the Founders, for example, up until the *1828 Noah Webster’s dictionary, religion ‘included a belief in the being and perfections of God, in the revelation of His will to man, in man’s obligation to obey His commands, in a state of reward and punishment, and in man’s accountability to God; and also true godliness or piety of life, and the practice of all moral duties.’*¹⁵⁷ That’s quite different from *our bland understanding of religion as any religion*, or for that matter, any belief or philosophy of life, including agnosticism and atheism, not to mention, Satanism and the inclusion of non-Christian cults.
91. There are many voices in the modern era that have cast the shadow of this new definition of religion backward onto the past and insisted that the Founders did not refer to the God of the Bible, the Creator or Christ, the Redeemer. Rather, they held to this bland and generic understanding of religion, but that is a forced revision of history. *“Nature’s God,” was indeed, the Creator, the God of the Bible.*
92. In another twist, some liberals note that John Adams, Joseph Story, James Kent, Daniel Webster, John Marshall, and John Quincy Adams were *Unitarians*. Adams, and perhaps others, were associated with a number of Christian movements. Modern Unitarians differ from this group, embracing transcendentalist views. Some are blatantly non-Christian. But historically, classic Unitarianism first

¹⁵⁶ Quoted by Fisher, *Black Robe Regiment*, 375.

¹⁵⁷ Barton, *Original Intent*, 313.

appeared in the colonies in 1785. *As of 1819*, their views were much more conservative. A Theological Dictionary notes that, “*In common with other Christians, they confess that He [Jesus] is the Christ, the Son of the Living God; and in one word, they believe all that the writers of the New Testament*, particularly the four Evangelists, have stated concerning him.”¹⁵⁸ Early pamphlets on Unitarianism noted that while Unitarians reject human creeds, they “strictly adhere to the great Protestant principle, ‘the Bible – the Bible only...’” No set of doctrines. No prescribed behavioral code, “but the words of the Lord Jesus and his Apostles...”¹⁵⁹ That’s the kind of Unitarian John Adams and the others were – not, unfortunately, as modern Unitarians. What changed? *After 1838*, Ralph Waldo Emerson began to reshape the earlier teachings of Unitarianism, dismantling its theology, its Christology, and its belief in the efficacy of Scripture. And Unitarianism *lost its soul, and morphed into a transcendental version of Christianity*, laced with ethical theism reaching back to Plato, Kant, and Stoics.¹⁶⁰ That view of Unitarianism is now cast backward, incorrectly, unto the Founding era.

93. In the Boston Public Garden, there is a statue of Edward Everett Hale. On the base is a quote: “*I am only one, but I am still one; I cannot do everything, but still, I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.*”

94. *Other voices have poisoned the well of our godly history.* Robert Ingersoll, in the 1880s and 1890s, falsely declared that the Founders “retired God from politics... The Declaration of Independence announces the sublime truth that all power comes from the people.” This denial that all power comes from God was a direct affront against the sovereign-

¹⁵⁸ Barton, *Original Intent*, 314.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 314.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 315.

ty of God – but Ingersoll was bold, and daring, and a slice of the population wanted to embrace His denial of God. **Ingersoll called America “the first secular government that was ever founded in this world.” He was wrong.** There was another one in Genesis 11, at Babel, and it perished.

95. **Charles and Mary Beard**, a century ago, in their liberal work, *Rise of American Civilization*, boldly and erroneously asserted that **the “national government was secular** from top to bottom” as the Founders intended it to be.¹⁶¹ And such works created the first revisionist cracks in the dam of American history. Other voices boldly joined the secular humanist choir with similar claims. Truth did not matter to these people – it was a narrative that they provided. Sometimes, not on the basis of what a Founder said, but what they alleged he did not say. Washington used veiled and formal language, ‘Divine Author,’ for God, and our ‘Blessed Religion’ for Christianity. He spoke of the ‘Almighty Being who rules over the Universe.’ He was, for many Founders, Providence – the Sovereign One.
96. W. E. Woodard claimed that George Washington never mentioned the name of Jesus. Yet, on June 12, 1779, Washington wrote to the Delaware Indians, “You do well to wish to learn our arts and ways of life, and above all, the religion of Jesus Christ... Congress will do everything they can to assist you in this wise intention.”¹⁶² In a handwritten prayer found after his death, the words, ‘Jesus Christ’ are mentioned sixteen times – with additional mentions of Jesus, Lord Jesus, etc. **The Founders were not Deists. Providence was no impersonal force. Washington’s daughter would call it “the greatest heresy to doubt his [George Washington’s] firm belief in Christianity.** His life, his writings, prove that he was a Christian.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Barton, *Original Intent*, 277.

¹⁶² Ibid, 280.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 281.

97. *Because of this century-long battle against truth, revisionist history, now accepted as fact, we have flipped the constitution and our history of faith on its head.* Now, we are reaping a whirlwind. The contradictions are stunning.

- ✓ In 1984, it was constitutional to display a creche and show the Christian origins of Christmas (LYNCH v. DONNELLY). Five years later (ALLEGHENY v. ACLU), and it was now illegal. On what basis? What changed in the constitution?
- ✓ In 1973, it was still *legal to display a copy of the Ten Commandments* on public property (ANDERSON v. SALT LAKE CITY CORP). But it was *illegal for kids, students, to see them displayed* (STONE v. GRAHAM) in 1980; and then, to display them at a courtroom (HARVEY v. COBB), in 1993. What inconsistency.
- ✓ We have congressional chaplains, and they *open congress daily with a prayer* and they have done so since the beginning of congress, and such prayer is deemed constitutional (MARSHALL v. CHAMBERS, 1983), but it is *unconstitutional for students to read those same prayers* (STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION v. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF NETCONG, 1970). How ridiculous can such a contradiction be? We are bending over backward to avoid the plain truth of our history – in some cases, the commandments are inscribed on our very buildings.
- ✓ In the same vein, it is *constitutional to begin public meetings with an invocation* (BOGEN v. DOTY, affirmed in 1979), yet it *is unconstitutional to allow students to hear invocations* in a public meeting (LEE v. WEISMAN, 1992/HARRIS v. JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT, 1994). Complete nonsense.

98. How did this shift, this conflict of two very different views of faith in the public sector occur? *The Court, and liberal culture, got caught in the progressive humanistic views* that were sweeping Europe and the West, rising out of the institutions of Germany – relativism, a war against absolutes, *“legal positivism,”* as it was termed, when applied to the judicial sector. In this new view – *the line between right and wrong was to be obliterated*, along with good and bad or any absolute standard. *Everything was relative* – to one’s background, or social status, or education, or benefits or the lack thereof. “Man,” not God, was the new measure. The standard – there was none – it floated. It moved. What was taboo, was now, in certain settings, under certain conditions, understandable, excused, even accepted – adultery, incest, robbery, even murder. All judgment was suspended – in an attempt to ‘understand the human dilemma’ that prompted the behavior. Relativism. No absolute standards. No God. No law – law is simply some past human standard that might not now apply to us. *This was Darwinism applied to morality. Men evolve and so must their laws.* Judges, not the law, are the ultimate determiners. The Framers of the Constitution and their intent was irrelevant, meaningless.

99. *John Dewey, the father of modern education, also a humanist*, made it clear. “The belief in ... the sanctity of some form of state consecrated by the efforts of our fathers and hallowed by tradition, is one of the stumbling blocks in the way of orderly and directed change.”¹⁶⁴ *Dewey’s efforts eventually untangled the public schools from their biblical basis to a humanistic, relativistic, Darwinist, Freudian ethos.* It took half a century for his efforts to manifest, but now they are in full bloom. In the same era, the Supreme Court began to embrace social positivism.¹⁶⁵

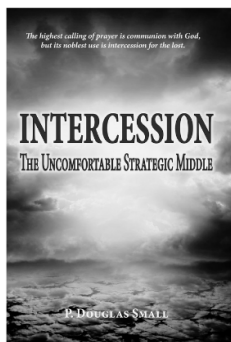
¹⁶⁴ Barton, *Original Intent*, 228.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 229.

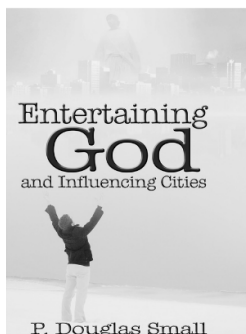
100. Judicial decree began to replace constitutionality. Legal relativism came into vogue. The living, ***changing, evolving constitution***, needed to be ‘interpreted’ by these Supreme Judges, now clairvoyants – more spiritual than judicial. They were, in fact, the new Framers of our new evolving constitution. The Court, acting as both a legislature (writing and creating law for the people) and issuing decrees (executive) was a river out of its banks. And ***the nation, for a century, has lived in danger of this poison flood of legal decisions.***¹⁶⁶

You are an AMBASSADOR of the Church, which is the embassy, the on-the-ground agency, the *ecclesia* (a word for government) of the KINGDOM of God, characterized by righteousness, peace and joy. Be a joyful ambassador. Be a person of peace. Stand for justice, for righteousness.

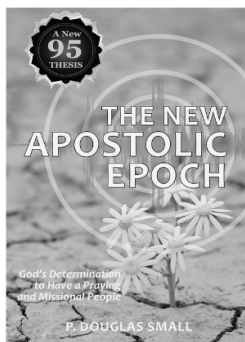
¹⁶⁶ Barton, *Original Intent*, 227-231.



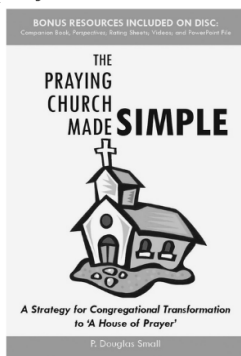
Jesus came to the middle to die praying from the middle cross. God wants to move us to the middle, connecting lost and hurting people to God. This is the central focus of intercession, the reconciliation of men and women to God, the Father, through Christ, by the enabling work of the Spirit.



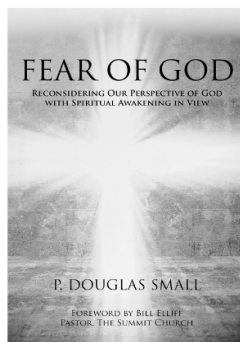
Entertaining God invites Him to reveal His secrets to us as His mysteries are unwrapped in riddles that slowly unravel over time. Their meanings become clearer as days and years go by.



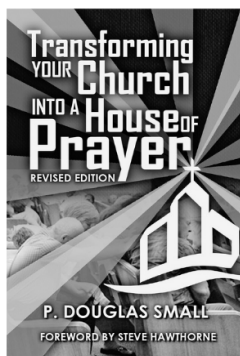
Apostolic epochs involve a breaking away, a new definition and a reorientation. They refocus kingdom purposes. The apostolic epoch that we are now entering is the fulfillment of the desire of Jesus, that His church be a house of prayer for all nations.



The Praying Church Made Simple is a leader's guide for a multi-year process to create a culture of prayer in a congregation. Here, you will find a strategy to lay the groundwork for an effective prayer ministry.



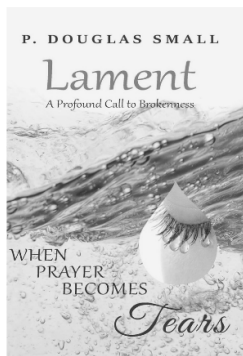
The more we reverence God, the higher self-worth and self-esteem rise without becoming self-centered, or being blinded by pride and arrogance. Nobility emerges. We see ourselves as God's children, reflecting His image.



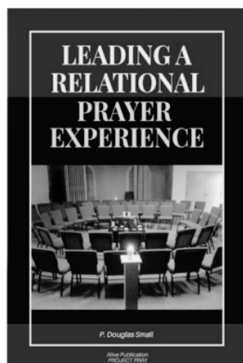
It was the desire of Jesus that the Temple be a house of prayer for the nations. Discover seven things that must change if the church is going to embrace a new reformation.



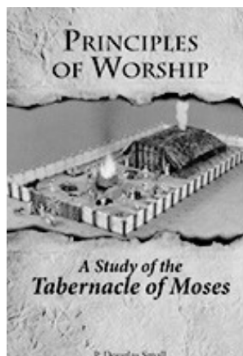
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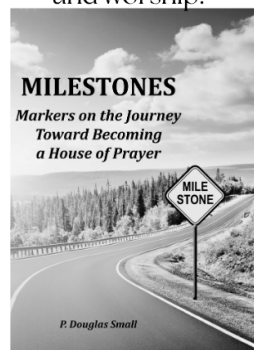
Lament is raw and honest prayer. It is a protest before God's throne that cries out for justice, change and divine intervention. It insists that things cannot continue as they are. God must act.



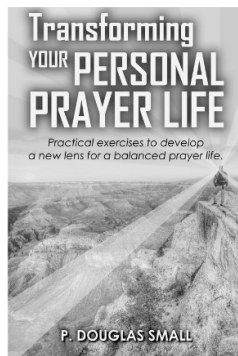
Prayer meetings do not need to be dead affairs - they can be alive, dynamic and life-changing. In this book, the focus is not a needs-based prayer meeting. This book is about transformational, Biblical, Christ-centered, Spirit-led prayer.



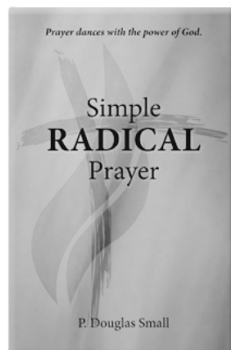
The secret to revival, Doug believes, is encoded in the tabernacle images. You will find the principles here dynamic. This is not your typical tabernacle book. "The tabernacle," Small says, "is a template for prayer and worship, a kind of roadmap into God's presence, a call for balance in prayer and worship."



This book is a roadmap toward making your church a house of prayer. Follow this guide to learn practical aspects of change as your congregation re-centers itself.



More than a book - this is a guide to radically change your prayer life. It provides a Biblical structure for prayer - based on Paul's concise theology of prayer. The key to transformation is rethinking what God thinks about you, and what you think about God - and that demands Scripture-based prayer.



There is power through persistent prayer, prayer that is beyond us, bigger than us.



The apostle Paul called the Corinthian church to become a community of 'ambassadors.' To be agents of reconciliation. Ambassadors work in a representative and liaison role between kings and kingdoms. The church is, in a sense, an embassy of the kingdom of God, but we need ambassadors to speak to mayors, congressional members, community and cultural influencers. Kingly, stately leaders who speak the language of love and peace.

Paul called us to pray for kings and those in authority. Jesus is the King of kings. Kings attended his birth. Why do we not engage community leaders with the claims of the gospel? Not in a confrontational manner, rather, we must first lead with love and posture as a kingdom of priests. However, to see someone come to Christ at the top of an influence pyramid has an enormous impact throughout the entire continuum. Does God really want nations to be joined to Him? If so, that process begins with stately, gracious ambassadors of the kingdom.



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